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ESCAPE TO LIFE

THIS powerful and original novel won the International Competition for the best story, sponsored by Chapman & Hall Ltd. and William Morrow & Co. of New York. It was selected from a very large number of competing manuscripts by a strong committee of judges, who declared it to be a "most remarkable" production, "alive and written in a key of grim humour," "full of action," and possessing the qualities of a "best seller." It has already won amazing success in Hungary (the country of its birth), Germany, Sweden, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Denmark and Holland, and is being published simultaneously in England and America.

FERENC KÖRMENDI



ESCAPE
TO
LIFE



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I

THE DESIGN

1

THEY were men of thirty-three or four, who had formerly been at school together. To-day the bond between them consisted of little more than the fact that they still referred to themselves as "the boys." In the classroom they had been held together by similar interests, abilities, family backgrounds; but now that marble-topped café tables stood before them instead of school desks, black coffee instead of inkwells, and the dread of responsibilities instead of the fear of examinations they could judge how much they had changed since their school days.

Once a week—later only once a month—they assembled in the café. Gossiping, joking, laughing, they met year in and year out to find out how the others were getting on, to hear who was a success and who a failure. Not that anything useful ever came of the meetings. It did no good to hear that poor old Vadas was in a bad way, no one could help him. And what would be the use of enquiring about Varga? He was certain to get ahead in his father's bank. Such details were of no importance. The important thing was laughter.

At first only a few of them met by chance during those troubled, gloomy days and disconsolate nights after the War. Later a few more familiar faces turned up.

Occasionally one of them would borrow the price of a meal from the rest, but another time someone would drive up in a new automobile. One returned from a Siberian war-prison, another appeared with an artificial leg. Still another wore a black patch over his right eye.

Many of them had enlisted in the army after leaving school in 1916. Some had served together in the same regiment, but most of them had lost sight of one another since their graduation. The café brought them together again. It was good to meet around the marble-topped tables. Now and then a stray sentence recalled the *Flammenwerfer* on the Isonzo, the lice-infested trenches in Volhynia, the barbed-wire fences in Russia. Then someone would laugh and say :

“Remember when Kelemen put his indiarubber into the stove and made such a stink that the history master had to chuck his lecture and take us for an airing? ”

Things went on cheerfully for three or four years. Sometimes a handful came, sometimes a crowd. At the meeting in celebration of the tenth anniversary of their graduation, only the few who lived abroad did not appear. That night for the last time they were all together—forty-seven of them. They scrutinized each other's clothes, asked “How are you? ” They listened to camouflaged complaints, to veiled boasts. They proposed toasts, joked and laughed, and were not in the least interested in each other. After midnight most of them rose with the comforting feeling that there was no earthly reason why they should ever set eyes on any of the rest for at least another five years.

But fifteen of them stuck together. Partly out of habit, partly because the meetings were welcome oases in their drab lives. There were well-to-do men among them and

poor ones, married men and bachelors, gentiles and Jews, humorists and bores. Not one was a success. They all knew it, but no one ever said so. The years passed over them and they began to grow grey about the temples, or bald on top, but still the boys assembled in the café at regular intervals and laughed and laughed and laughed.

2

Early in November Kelemen had to go to his dentist. On the table in the waiting-room he noticed an English illustrated paper. One of the pictures attracted his attention. It showed an ornamental gate in the background, with a tent-like contrivance in front. At the tent opening stood a man in a dark suit with a sheet of paper in his hand. A number of people, some of them in uniform, stood beside him.

Kelemen looked at the photograph, and since he could understand no English, turned the page. But the word *Hungarian* caught his eye and he looked back. He examined the text to see if he could make out the meaning: *Mr T. A. Cadar, the well-known architect of Hungarian origin. . . .* He gazed at the picture of the man standing before the tent. I would swear, he said to himself, that this idiot with the paper in his hand is Toni Kadar. *On the right, Mrs T. A. Cadar. . . .* Mrs T. A. Cadar. That must mean his wife. He's married then. Kelemen pondered. Who in the world could have married that fool? He replaced the paper on the table.

In a low armchair opposite him sat an elderly woman holding a handkerchief to her right cheek and moaning painfully at intervals. Kelemen surveyed her black lace blouse, her untidy black skirt, her shapeless shoes, and

picked up the paper again. The face in the photograph was not very clear, but suddenly he noticed that the man held his left arm bent at the elbow, pressed tight to his side, allowing his hand to hang down in front.

It's Kadar. I remember distinctly how he used to hold his left arm. And he could see Antal Kadar standing outside the classroom by the window, his right hand holding a book from which he crammed even between lessons, the left dangling precisely as in the picture. And around him the other boys yelled in a chorus: "Penguin . . . pen—guin!" Kadar's way of holding his arm really did make him look like a penguin with wing-stumps hanging from its stooping shoulders.

I'm damned if it isn't Toni Kadar. But why on earth did anyone waste perfectly good printers' ink on him? And in an English paper. Lord, what a numbskull he was in school! Kelemen slapped the paper down on the table and began to pace up and down the waitingroom. The old woman glanced at him.

He must be somebody or they wouldn't put his picture in the paper. . . . Damn it, I've been waiting for twenty minutes. . . . And he never gives me more than two minutes at a time when I do get in. I could understand it if he charged by the visit instead of a flat rate for two fillings. . . .

He strode up to the table and snatched the paper. How did it get here? He glanced over his shoulder at the old woman. She was sitting in the armchair with her head in her hands. Kelemen cleared his throat nervously, stepped to the window, and with a quick determined movement, tore out the page; coughed again to relieve his embarrassment, and, folding the sheet between his fingers, slipped it into his pocket.

It was past five when he reached the office. First he had to explain why he was late. The manager accepted his excuse with an unfriendly wave of his fat hand. Kelemen sat down at his desk and took out the "List of Accounts to be Collected." Collection is rotten. Sixty per cent. won't pay. The boss will be wild. He leaned back in his chair, lit a cigarette and took out the stolen picture.

A small, freckled youngster sat at the opposite desk.

"I say, Kramer, do you speak English?"

"English?" Kramer looked up stupidly from his ledger. "No. Why?"

"Who does around here?"

"Let me think. . . . Nusi in the correspondence department."

Kelemen balanced his cigarette on the edge of the tin ashtray, took a few sheets of notepaper, slipped the picture between them, and stood up.

"What's all the excitement about English?" asked Kramer from the other desk.

Kelemen cleared his throat. "A friend of mine sent me a newspaper clipping in English. It's all about himself. I'd like to find out exactly what it says." And he left the room.

Nusi in the correspondence department was an old maid, fat, sweaty, hysterical. She sat before the typewriter, and her nervous fingers beat a tattoo on the keys, like machine-gun fire.

"What do you want?" she snapped at Kelemen. "For Heaven's sake, don't bother me. I'm nearly crazy with work."

"Nusi, darling," he tried to pacify her. "Don't get huffy. I want you to do me a favor. Could you translate

these few words for me?" He took the picture from between the sheets of notepaper. "It won't take you a second. Here, have a cigarette."

The woman snatched the cigarette from the pack, lit it from the match Kelemen offered, and, gazing at the caption under the picture, blew out the smoke in a straight, thin cone.

"Shall I read it to you, or do you want me to write it out?"

"If you wouldn't mind?"

She began to scribble on her stenographer's pad: *Mr T. A. Kadar, the well-known architect of Hungarian origin. . . .*

"Here you are. Now run along. Thanks for the cigarette."

She handed back the picture with the translation, and the next minute she was off again, forcing a barrage out of her typewriter.

"You're an angel. Thanks awfully," said Kelemen and backed away slowly, reading the text.

Well, now, Kadar, that is, *Mr T. A. Cadar, the well-known architect of Hungarian origin . . . sounds good . . . opening his estate of eight hundred cottages in Port Elizabeth, South Africa . . . what the hell does he do with eight hundred cottages? . . . Beautiful seaside resort. . . . Holiday camp for children presented to the public.* That means the whole outfit belongs to him. Eight hundred cottages! Good Lord! *Helena Village, named after Mrs Cadar. . . . That nincompoop! He must be filthy with money!*

He went to the tariffs department to borrow an atlas. He opened to the index. Port Adelaide. . . . Port-au-Prince. . . . Port Elizabeth . . . page 66. There, in South

Africa . . . a British possession or dominion or dependency or something. He wrote out a temporary receipt for the atlas, which he wanted to take home overnight, and went back to his office. The departmental manager stood at his desk.

"Mr Kelemen has a toothache," he said with a malicious grin. "You were delayed by the dentist and now you run about instead of working to make up for lost time."

"I beg your pardon, Mr Bloch," retorted Kelemen angrily. Then immediately in a quieter tone, "I'm sorry. First, I really had to go to the dentist, and then I was attending to a very important matter—to some extent a business matter." He produced the atlas. "A friend of mine has written from Port Elizabeth in South Africa that he wishes to come to Budapest, and he asked me to make out the best itinerary for him." He stopped. Bloch, instead of paying attention to his story was looking at the ceiling, tapping the floor with his foot, drumming on the desk with his fingers.

"Port Elizabeth," he said slowly. "He had no one else to ask for an itinerary but you?"

"But he is an old friend of mine."

"Good," said the other with the haughty air of the dissatisfied superior. "Good. And how are you getting on with your collections?"

Go to hell, wished Kelemen and looked at the sheet on his desk.

"I am not quite up to date," he said very meekly. "Sixty-two first and fourteen second reminders, fifteen are in the hands of the solicitors. There are six summonses. I would sue Berger Fischer & Co. without hesitation."

"So you would sue Berger Fischer & Co. without hesitation, Mr Kelemen!" ejaculated the man of authority. "If you don't mind, you can leave it to me to sue them with or without hesitation. On the other hand, will you see to it that the whole list is completed by to-morrow, or else . . ." he broke off abruptly and walked away.

Kelemen sat down. Go to blazes. He spread out his papers on the desk and settled down to work.

An indefinable impatience filled him when he left the office after eight o'clock. The fall weather was rainy, filthy. He was cold as he strode along the wet streets, holding his rickety umbrella. The shabby silk cover had holes in it, and the rain trickled through them. Damn it all. That idiot owns a city in South Africa, and I have to listen to that swine Bloch for three hundred and twenty pengö a month. Damn it. It's a rotten world.

Stupid, shapeless anger strangled him as he plodded along the muddy pavement. He came near cursing aloud at a fat old woman who held her umbrella stiffly over her head and bumped into him as she passed. Clumsy old bitch. Can't she lift her umbrella higher? He was in a hurry. When he stepped off the pavement at the next crossing, his foot landed in a puddle, and the slush squirted on his socks. God damn it! He reached the little restaurant where he paid by the month for lunch and dinner.

"Come on, Mariska," he shouted to the dingy waitress as he took off his drenched overcoat. "A couple of eggs, wurst in vinegar with lots of onion, and nut-cakes. Hurry up. I'm starved."

He did not enjoy the food. He sniffed at the eggs until Mrs Tauber, who ran the place, assured him with an

offended air that they were new-laid. There was too much onion in the wurst. A chip of walnut shell got between his teeth. Filthy place. God. . . .

When the waitress had cleared the plates away Kelemen laid the atlas on the table. Port Elizabeth, South Africa. It must be hot there. . . . He turned to the descriptive part of the volume. Union of South Africa . . . Boers, British, Germans, Dutch . . . Capital: Pretoria . . . diamonds, tin, minerals . . . Exports: skins, wool, ostrich feathers . . . Pop.: 87,063. . . . Tiny little hole. Thirty-seven thousand people. Maybe they are all rich. And Toni Kadar owns eight hundred cottages. Maybe they are only nigger huts. How stupid; they wouldn't make such a fuss in the paper if they were only nigger huts. At any rate we know that Port Elizabeth is in South Africa, and that Mr T. A. Cadar is in Port Elizabeth and that he is a well-known architect. . . . And what good does it do me?

Next day he returned the atlas.

But the Kadar business did not leave him any peace. For a day or two he managed to forget it. Then he re-discovered the torn page in a pocket of his blue serge suit. He looked at it, turned it about. He knew the caption by heart now. What luck the idiot has. He was the biggest blockhead in school and now he must be worth millions. Eight hundred cottages! Incredible. What does he do with them? Does he sell them outright or rent them? And I, for a paltry three hundred and twenty pengö. . . . This thought annoyed him most, and for days he was in a black temper.

Andor Kelemen, thirty-three years old; tall and broad shouldered, with his sleek hair, pale cheeks and soured mouth—Andor Kelemen looked on his schoolmate's

success with awe, uncertainty and envy. This Toni Kadar must have gone abroad soon after he left school, while Andor Kelemen settled down to a fairly comfortable, grey sort of existence. His life began in nineteen sixteen when he tried to enlist in the army, but was rejected for general constitutional weakness. So he entered his father's leather business, which was profitable in those days. Suddenly, soon after the War, it went bankrupt. Fortunately Mama had some savings. He had found a job in a small private bank which made a business of fishing in troubled waters. Experience in those times was not necessary for money making—only a pair of good eyes and a keen nose. The big thing was to know exactly how to manipulate certain stocks and foreign currencies. Nice little sums passed through his hands, and enough remained in them to provide theatre tickets, a pleasant room with separate entrance and girls of the inexpensive sort, but pretty and decorative.

This lasted for several years, until the filthy little bank went on the rocks. He was lucky not to be sent off with his former directors to a well populated prison, and luckier still to save some of his money. About that time his father died, and there were his mother and Sari and Joli on his hands. Fortunately, Sari married the owner of a delicatessen shop. It vexed Kelemen in the beginning that his brother-in-law sold sausages behind the counter. He always referred to him as a "Manufacturer of Food Products." But that was neither here nor there. What mattered was that Karoly was a good sort and worshipped Sari, and that Sari lived well. And if she had to sit behind the cash desk from morning till night, she did contribute to Mama's keep.

Joli needed only a little food and her school fees.

While his money lasted, life was pleasant and carefree. He loitered around the stock exchange, backed horses, spent a good deal of time in cafés, and sometimes carried out shady but harmless and quite unimportant transactions in the shape of small commission deals. The days passed, one much like another. Then suddenly he came to the end of his rope, with neither money nor a job. He had just changed his last bill, borrowed from his brother-in-law, when an old friend of his father got him a place in a big shipping and forwarding agency. He was then twenty-six years old.

He loathed his work, and, since he could easily have done three times as much, he did only just enough to ensure the safety of his job. Six years of it! Six years! What chances did the future hold? A sudden economic revival that would give him an opportunity to get out of this stupid, hopeless business? Or perhaps the boss's daughter might fall in love with him? Then, of course, he could stay with the firm. Empty, futile Hungarian fantasies.

What had he actually achieved? A dissatisfied, ill-tempered pig of a manager, dull work, a third-rate furnished room and breakfast, two meals a day in a cheap eatinghouse, occasional movies, cafés, a radio (on instalments), cigarettes, a few cheap women, and—the decorous pose as head of a family, which cost him a fourth of his salary. Hungarian realities.

His hair was growing thinner on top. In the days when he was a bank clerk he had bought a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles which he had worn ever since. He expected nothing from life, had no interests, and had lived through so many disappointments that he did not think it worth while to wonder what the future might bring. Andor

Kelemen was thirty-three. He looked twenty-five and felt fifty. Disillusion, boredom and weariness filled his life.

When, eight or ten days later he again came across the photograph, he stared at the "Penguin" standing in front of the ornamental gate and said to himself: God! what a failure I am!

3

It was the twenty-sixth, the last Thursday of the month, the night of the monthly meeting at the café.

Kelemen stirred his black coffee feverishly. He saw an extra lump of sugar on Kalotay's tray. "May I take it?" He leaned back in his chair. "Boys, do you remember Kadar?"

"Antal Kadar?"

"The Penguin?"

"Of course, I remember him."

"I haven't seen him since we were at school. What's he doing?"

"Well," said Kelemen slowly, giving every word its full importance, "what would you say if I told you that he has got on better than any of us?"

Silence for a second.

"He was the biggest idiot in the class," said big Weiss, "so I shouldn't be surprised at anything. What about him?"

"Come on," urged Nemes. "Is he a film star?"

"No, not that," said Marton, the lawyer, "because our dear Simon would have found that out long ago and written reviews about him in the *Theatrical World*, eh, Simon?" He eyed the journalist.

"Shut up," retorted Simon. "He's done better anyway than if he had put his case in your hands." The remark went home. Marton had been acting for a petty defaulter who got a long sentence, mainly, in the opinion of the boys, on account of the clumsy and unduly belligerent attitude of the counsel for the defence. Marton's pince-nez glittered in the light. He tried to think of a withering retort.

"That will do," interposed Amman, the elegant, cool and always superior secretary to the Minister of Commerce. "Score: one all. Let's get on. What's happened to the Penguin?" He turned to Kelemen.

Kelemen wanted to work up interest. "What would you say if I told you that he owns eight hundred cottages at the seaside?"

"There is no such thing as a seaside place with eight hundred cottages owned by one man," remarked Kalotay.

"Hollywood," said big Weiss.

"No," said little Weiss spitefully. "He means cottage cheeses. Kadar is in the cheese business."

"Don't be silly," Kelemen retorted. "I'm not joking."

"How did you find out about him?" asked Nemes, blinking sceptically.

"From this." Kelemen produced the page from his pocket, laid it on the table, and covered it with his hand.

"What's that?"

"I'll tell you." He leaned forward. "The other day I was at the dentist's and had to wait a long time. I was looking at the magazines in the waitingroom——"

"And tore this page out of one of them," concluded Simon, imitating Kelemen's tone.

"Well, what of it? Of course, I tore it out. Did you expect me to take the whole magazine?" He tried to put

sarcasm into his voice, which was trembling slightly with annoyance. "If you keep interrupting I'll never finish."

"All right," little Weiss was curious. "You needn't get sore. Carry on."

"Well then," continued Kelemen, his ardour damped, "here's the picture. Take a good look at it." He picked it up. "Antal Kadar, the Penguin, has become a millionaire in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He's a big man—owns a whole city. I'll read what it says. Mr T. A. Cadar, the well-known architect of Hungarian origin. . . ." He recited the whole text, keeping his eyes on the paper.

"Do you know English as well as that?" demanded Katona. "Can you translate at sight?"

"Oh," said Kelemen airily, "I know a little. Do you?"

"Yes," said Katona in English, with frigid elegance. "No, I don't. You needn't be afraid. I won't catch you up. Let's see it." He reached for the page.

Kelemen handed it over. Toni Kadar's picture went round the table. Everyone handled it, everyone recognized him by the way he held his arm. They decided at last that it was undoubtedly genuine and that Antal Kadar had certainly got on in the world.

"Stop!" Simon interrupted suddenly. "Let me see that paper again." He turned it over, held it closer to his eyes. "This is a publicity article, paid for by the line. Not that it matters."

"Well," remarked big Weiss scornfully, "he may have gone bankrupt by now."

"You idiot," said Marton. "Do you think it's the same all over the world as it is here? These people abroad, my lad, aren't made of hot air."

"How do you know?" interposed Rona, who managed his father's china store down town. "Where do you get your information? From foreign illustrated magazines? You may be right, Weiss, but—" he took a huge gold cigarette-case from his hip pocket—"have you any idea how rich some people are abroad? Do you know that even the large fortune of such a . . . a building contractor sinks into insignificance compared with the enormous wealth of a . . . a . . . say the owner of a rice plantation?"

"In Port Elizabeth," Nemes reminded him, "there are no rice plantations."

"There may be," insisted Rona. "And if not rice, then coffee or cotton or something."

"I don't see what you're getting at," exclaimed Kelemen impatiently. He felt it was his duty to stand up for Kadar. "Coffee or no coffee, you won't deny that the Penguin has a lot of money."

"A lot of money? The question is what you call a lot. Relatively speaking——"

"Relatively hell," someone exclaimed. "Supposing that each of those cottages is worth at least ten thousand pengö, then the lot is eight million—if they really belong to him."

"Ten thousand pengö? I'll give you fifteen thousand apiece," cried another, and the storm broke. They all shouted opinions across the table; sceptical, terse, ecstatic, grudging, angry, supercilious, hungry, envious words. Ten thousand, ten millions, pengö, pounds, dollars, speculator, luck.

"Why, his income tax alone, boys! . . ." Amman, usually so cool and elegant, got red in the face and thumped on the table. Kelemen leaned back in his chair, pleased with the upheaval he had caused. Suddenly a

chill ran down his spine when he thought of his own three hundred and twenty pengö a month.

Finally the pandemonium subsided, and it was resolved that: "Subject to the picture's being authentic and the description true in substance, Kadar was unquestionably doing well, but there was nothing remarkable about that, considering that standards of wealth were different out there. In any case it must be admitted that a poor Hungarian boy, an old schoolmate, had done pretty well abroad. Of course, outside of this miserable country anyone could make a fortune."

"Wait a minute. I don't think he was so poor. He always had good clothes."

"How can you possibly remember such details?"

"No, I'm absolutely positive. He lived with some relatives who were quite decent people."

"Very likely. But I know he used books from the free library and went through school on a scholarship."

"Do you remember," said Kalotay, "when Halmay examined him just before the end of the term and told him to——"

"That's nothing. Remember when Hampel found a copy of *La Vie Parisienne* in Andorffy's geography book?"

For thirteen years such incidents had been revived again and again. They all began "That's nothing, but remember when I——" Stories were continually added to and embellished. Reality was not essential. Their voices merged at last into exuberant, unending laughter. School life appeared before them like magic, gilding the grey of their daily routine.

Kelemen did not laugh. He forced a grin to hide his disappointment, but he was annoyed. The interest in his

Kadar story had died too soon. It did not create the sensation he had hoped for. The fools—they can't realize—what can't they realize?

He took a crumpled cigarette from his pocket, lit it, and inhaled the smoke deeply. He began to see clearly what these fools could not realize. There were material possibilities in this Kadar business. He closed his eyes, tilted back his chair, and blew the smoke slowly through his nostrils. Steady, steady! Go at it carefully. Pull the right wires. . . . What if they can't see the possibilities? The main thing is that I know what this Kadar business is worth.

He opened his eyes and looked around the laughing circle, rapped on the table with his gold signet ring and said lightly: "I say, everyone, wouldn't you be amused if you were off in a foreign country and got a message from your old friends?"

"I suppose you want us to write to Kadar?" Nemes took off his eyeglasses and blinked into Kelemen's face.

"Exactly," replied Kelemen quietly. "Why not?"

"Well, why?" said Nemes. "Were you such good friends as all that?"

"Not exactly." He looked at Nemes coldly. "Neither were you," he added. A warm wave swept over him and he nearly said, "But I might be some day."

"I certainly wasn't on intimate terms with him," declared Nemes. "What about you, Kalotay?"

"I can't say I was."

"You, Amman?"

"No."

"Marton?"

"I couldn't stand him."

"Simon, Kempner, Rona, Katona, what about you?"

They all shook their heads.

"Well then," said Nemes with malicious satisfaction. "Since there is no one who could stand him, it's very logical for us to send him greetings." They were all on Nemes' side.

Steady. Steady. "See here, Nemes," Kelemen began thoughtfully. "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. Anyone would think Kadar had attacked your honor or stolen your money. Do you think I want anything from him? Does Kalotay or Amman? If I did, I could have written him long ago, without mentioning a word to any of you. But if we wrote a couple of lines—Hello, Kadar. How are you? We still remember you—don't you think he would be pleased? I have no use for sentimentality—you know that—but when you think that a note would reach him just about Christmas time. . . . But if you are going to make such a fuss I'll be afraid to speak to you the next time we meet, for fear you'll remember that I boxed your ears twenty years ago and after that we weren't on particularly good terms. Am I right?"

He was right. He had swung them over to his side. Rona took out his fat fountain pen and tapped with it on a tray. "Waiter, bring us some paper and an envelope."

The paper arrived. Rona unscrewed his pen. "Shall we be funny or serious?"

"It's not you that's going to write. It's Kelemen," said Amman, taking the pen from Rona's hand in the hope that Kelemen out of politeness would ask him to do the writing. But Kelemen after gazing into space for a moment reached for the pen.

"Now. What shall we say?"

"Keep it simple," said Marton. "Write what you said just now, only you might put it a little better—Dear Kadar, we are glad to learn that——"

"You are rolling in money," Nemes suggested acidly.

"Let's say," proposed Kelemen, "we are sitting here in a café. We have not forgotten you and are glad to learn that you are doing well."

"'We haven't forgotten you' doesn't sound so good," interrupted Katona.

Finally Kelemen wrote :

Dear Kadar—Merry Christmas from a small group of your old classmates. We have heard by chance that you are married and have made a great success. Congratulations! All of us have happy memories of our school days, and we wish you the best of luck in the New Year.

"Here you are," said Kelemen as he finished. "Let's all sign it." And he offered the pen to his neighbor.

"You sign it first," said Rona, but he reached for the pen. Kelemen signed and passed on the letter and the pen.

"Legibly, please," jeered Nemes, but no one paid any attention to him.

The paper came back to Kelemen. "Come on, Nemes. Don't be a fool. Sign it."

"Not I!" Nemes stubbornly refused the pen. "I don't care a hoot for Kadar or his cottages. Leave me out of it."

"As you please," retorted Kelemen withdrawing the pen. Then, looking sharply into Nemes' face, "Do you know what you are? A spoil-sport. A rotten wet-blanket."

"All right. You can't make me mad. But I'm not going to give in."

"Never mind," interrupted Rona nervously. "Stop quarrelling and address the letter."

They argued about the return address. Someone suggested the café. Finally they agreed that Kelemen should write his name and address on the flap of the envelope. Kelemen pocketed the letter. "I'll mail it to-morrow."

About midnight the party began to break up.

They took leave of one another and started out in different directions. Rona hailed a taxi. The two Weisses took a streetcar. Amman and Katona shared an umbrella. It was raining and the muddy road was almost deserted.

Kelemen reached his lodgings. He yawned as he switched on the light in his room. It's cold. Damn that stingy old woman, she wouldn't put on more coal at night. He threw the letter on the table and laid the picture under the collar-box in the wardrobe. He stood beside the table eyeing the letter. Rubbish. Senseless Christmas greeting. He won't answer it. I wouldn't, I know. Not if I lived in the moon and they wrote me from Mars. He stared at the ceiling. If it had a personal touch to it, or something to rouse his interest. . . .

He took off his coat, vest and collar and dumped them in a heap on the chair. Suddenly he had an idea. On the shelf he found a crusted old pen. Now for ink. He had none, but he remembered a bottle of washing blue on top of the cupboard in the hall. He took off his shoes and tiptoed out, knocked against something, muttered a curse and stopped. If I fool around in the dark the old woman will wake up and think I'm trying to go into the maid's room. Not that I care if she does.

His fingers groped along the top of the cupboard. He

could feel, by the soft, dry touch, that they were making lines in a thick layer of dust. Something felt like a bottle. It was the blueing. He took it back to his room, uncorked the bottle and dipped the pen into it. The liquid wrote, though very faintly. Then, still barefoot and in his shirt-sleeves, he sat down at the table and spread out the letter.

Dear Kadar—I feel that I should add a few lines, because it was I who discovered your picture in the World's Sunday Pictures. I was sincerely glad to read the good news about you and . . . (he had to think what to write next) . . . you can imagine how interested I am in everything that has happened to you—even though we have not seen each other for fourteen years. It would give me the greatest pleasure to hear from you, and it would be fine if we could meet again sometime. (Shall I write more? No, that's enough.) Please give my regards to your wife. Best wishes from Andi Kelemen.

He put the letter back in the envelope and sealed it. I'll send it off to-morrow, registered. I suppose I can't mail it with the company's letters, even if I did tell Bloch it is more or less business.

He finished undressing and climbed into bed. It's not quite straight of me, and Nemes was perfectly right. I shouldn't really have written on the same piece of paper. Why worry? What does it matter? If the letter is returned, it will come back to me and nobody will be any the wiser. He closed his eyes. Good God, but if this letter doesn't come back. If it reaches him and if . . . it . . . draws a winning number. . . . Daydreams. I've got to be smart about it. Steady. Steady. There's nothing to lose and plenty to gain. The whole business costs only a postage stamp.

II

THE LOOSE END

1

IT was about the end of November, 1918, when the sub-lieutenant reached Budapest, ragged, exhausted, starving.

On the section of the Italian front where he had lain among Czechs, Bosnians and Hungarians, things began to go wrong in the middle of October. That was the only way to describe it—things began to go wrong, which meant that once they had no provisions for five days. Well, war was war. Those who had chocolate lived on it as long as they could make it last. It was not the first time that the kitchen-wagon had been stuck for a day or two and left them without food. But five days!

Then the Italian airmen. Earlier in the war they had sometimes dropped, instead of bombs and steel arrows, thousands of pamphlets printed in perfect German or tolerable Hungarian. Once d'Annunzio's plane flew over. Lieutenant Lantos almost hit the machine when he tried to shoot it down.

But now pamphlets of a different sort fell from the sky. "Lay down your arms. Go back to your homes. Your Bulgarian allies have given up. The victorious armies of the Entente are approaching the borders of your country." Proclamations of this kind were printed on the leaflets. There were others too. "Go back to your

families. Refuse to obey the butchers who brought you to this slaughter."

Such things were alarming. Uncertainty and restlessness increased when the notorious Major-General Basch—the "bloodhound"—turned up unexpectedly in the second line trenches, and when Lieutenant Kauser ordered them to shoot a Czech Corporal named Trcka who was found with four or five seditious pamphlets in his pocket. Nothing much was said, for everybody hated Corporal Trcka, the low-down, scheming, self-centred swine—poor devil.

In the last days of October everything disintegrated. Officers disappeared, and the men began to desert the trenches. The sub-lieutenant, too, started on his endless trek in the direction of home with seventy or eighty others who left the trenches in his section. In the fields of the Tauer Valley they were fortunate enough to find a few vegetable marrows—some the size of a small barrel—which could be baked on an open fire, but were not at all bad eaten raw. When the company reached Ossiach they numbered only seventeen. Here they had a rumpus with two peasants driving along the highway, took possession of their carts and rode in comfort for a day or two.

Gabor, Altmann, Nagy were left behind at Villach. It was a wonder that they could drag themselves so far—dysentery from the raw marrow was eating out their guts. It was unmercifully cold. Nobody paid any attention to them in Villach, for the place was paralyzed with fear of an invasion by the South Slavs. There, through some unfathomable miracle, they got into a train and travelled for eight or ten days.

One night—they had no idea where they were—shooting started along the railroad track, and bullets came into

their compartment. At the first shots they automatically flattened themselves out, some on the seats, some on the floor. Little Feledy's face went yellow and he screamed : "God damn this rotten world !" On his left hand, in place of two fingers, two bleeding stumps appeared. The wound bled horribly.

One of them went in search of a doctor. The others ran to find out what was up. This was not organized shooting. It was the senselessness of the civilian world—the world of peace and of belief in system and order. No doctor could be discovered. The boys tied up the wound with filthy rags ; and, squeezing themselves into impossible positions, they cleared one of the benches for little Feledy. On the third day the boy's face turned from yellow to white, from white to black. The next morning, when the train stopped at a village, they handed out his body wrapped in his topcoat. Boross took his watch, knife and identity card. "Well, he's reached home, anyway," someone remarked. It was raining drearily, and the train rolled on.

Days later one of them at the window cried : "I say, look at that. The Hungarian flag." The train stopped and they were told to get out. The sub-lieutenant started to walk. The slushy road seemed endless, but he got to a town called Lendva after two and a half days of painful plodding.

After a few days' loitering at Lendva he was shoved into a third-class compartment by a sergeant of the gendarmes who gave him a green chit on which was written with indelible pencil : Budapest, South Station.

The train jogged on and on. Lake Balaton was a poisoned green, and the rain shot into it like a flight of javelins.

At Fehervar came a surprise; at long tables on the platform everyone in uniform was served fairly decent soup, boiled beef and potatoes, and a cup of black coffee, while a gipsy band played the *Marseillaise* for all they were worth. He was blind with weariness and his legs felt like lumps of lead. At dusk he climbed into a railroad car that was shunted on a side track and sank down on a velvet seat. In a few minutes the car was switched up to the platform and passengers crowded in. He fell asleep.

It was dark when he woke up. Was this Budapest? Yes, of course, South Station, although he could hardly recognize it. The travellers poured out of the train, but otherwise scarcely a soul was in or outside the station. He remembered the station in former times: hustling crowds, porters, luggage trolleys, streetcars, taxis, horse carriages. But this was different. Something was wrong. Only a few people hurried along the darkest side of the street. What was the matter with them?

For a while he followed a small group of departing passengers, then stopped. This is Budapest. Where am I to go? The regimental depot is in Lugos; my people live in Torda. What am I to do in Budapest? He said it over and over, sometimes aloud, as if he expected an answer from somewhere.

His head felt empty, a dull pressure squeezed his temples. He stood still in the unnatural silence of the night. Or am I in Budapest? I could get a train for Torda from the East Station—if this really is Budapest. He noticed the gold letters on a window: Café. I could just go in there for a cup of coffee. But it was dark behind the large window panes, and only an occasional street-lamp gleamed like a Cyclops' eye. Not a living soul as far as he could see. What was the matter?

He walked a few steps, then stopped again. He racked his brain to remember some of the new words he had heard during the last few days: Revolution, Collapse, Republic, Soldiers' Council, Line of Demarcation, Plebiscite, Famine. All empty, meaningless sounds, mixed up with the melody of the *Marseillaise* which the gipsy band had played incessantly in Fehervar. He remembered that a gentleman in the train had asked him what his name was. "Kadar, Antal Kadar." "Is that a real Hungarian name?" "Yes—that is, my grandfather changed it. His name was Kantner, before he left Saxony." Then the gentleman had leaned over to him and said in a low, confidential voice: "Mr Kadar, don't worry. This whole Jewish circus won't last more than a couple of months." He had been too tired to ask what that meant.

He was still standing before the café in the deserted street. Suddenly four policemen, bristling with sabres, carbines and revolver pouches, approached in the middle of the road. Thank God! living human beings. He started towards them, the patrol stopped in a huddle. That's wrong, he thought, they ought to break into open formation with ten paces between each of them.

"What are you doing here?" a constable with a big moustache asked at last.

"I've just come, sergeant, and——" The policeman cut him short.

"And I advise you to hop it, because the Russian prisoners have broken out of camp and are marching into town." The patrol went on.

Well, what next? Damn it to hell! Can't I make up my mind what to do? I'm standing here like a cow at a gate. He looked up again at the gold letters over the

café. It's closed . . . the only place I can go to is Aunt Anna's . . . they won't mind if I turn up so late.

His hob-nailed boots were heavy on the pavement and the hollow sound echoed from the walls of the silent houses. At the Boulevard he met another patrol, still others at either end of the bridge. No one paid any attention to him. The half-dozen civilians who came his way made a detour in order to avoid him. An electric clock at the bridge-head indicated nine o'clock but it might have stopped. The long avenue to the West Station was empty, not a soul as far as he could see.

Well, let's go, whether it's nine o'clock or ninety-nine. He reached the large apartment house where Aunt Anna lived. A heavy door with a small window in it—that hadn't been there before. He rang the bell again and again, knocked and banged on the door. To hell with the concierge! Is he deaf? After a while the door opened wide enough to let him squeeze in. It was not the old concierge. A great bumpkin stood in the doorway and eyed him with suspicion. Seeing no weapons, he calmed down. "Go ahead. You will have to walk upstairs; the elevator isn't working."

On the door of the apartment four storeys up was a note: *Bell out of order. Please knock.* He knocked and knocked until a flushed, unkempt girl appeared at the door-pane. Silence—then the shuffling of feet.

"Who is it?" A man's shaky voice.

"Me, Uncle Rudi. Is it you?"

"Who is it?" Somewhat firmer.

"It's me—Toni. Let me in, please!"

The light was switched on, the door opened, and Uncle Rudi stood there in trousers and an overcoat. "Good God! It's you! But what a sight you are!"

The small electric globe spread a sleepy, yellow light in the cold, stale-smelling passage. Uncle Rudi backed up in alarm. Why did he say: "But what a sight you are"?

He walked in and stepped slowly to the small round mirror that hung over the bench. A hollow, uncontrolled laugh burst from him as he looked at himself.

"I've been coming from Asiago ever since the twenty-sixth of October. . . ." He spoke into the looking-glass, then turned round. Uncle Rudi had disappeared. A moment later a white, soft bundle, redolent of sleep, was sobbing on his shoulder.

"Toni, my little Toni! Thank God you're back. Toni dear." It was Aunt Anna. His grubby hands felt the old woman's warm back through her creased nightgown; his bristly face was covered with kisses and tears; the dishevelled white hair tickled his eye. A moaning, choking, plaintive sound forced its way from his throat to his mouth, tears ran down his dirty cheeks.

He could remember, as if in a dream, the slamming of doors, the unkempt maid carrying wood and newspaper across the passage, the old couple standing before him in their nightclothes. Hot water in the tub, and soap; it was a queer feeling—to lie like this in hot water; then a nightshirt and a pair of Uncle Rudi's pants and a yellow overcoat smelling of naphthalene round his shoulders. He sat there shivering at the table in the cold diningroom, drank coffee and ate potato-dumplings. The old people stood watching him gulp the food. After the last bite an avalanche of questions started. "Where? When? With whom? How?" He tried to answer. "I have been coming from Asiago ever since the twenty—" Suddenly he turned pale and felt the coffee and potato-dumplings in an acrid mass moving up into his throat.

"Leave him alone, Rudolf," he heard Aunt Anna's muffled voice. "Don't you see he can't talk? He's tired out, poor darling. Teri, bring the cot and sheets and the brown rug. Here is your own old bed, Toni."

He lay on the old iron cot in the corner of the dining-room and stared at the ceiling, while the bed began to move in the rhythm of the jolting train, and jogged and jogged. Something murmured dully in his head, and the murmurings were torn by flashes and explosions. Suddenly he could hear little Feledy's gurgling, heavy breathing. Then a swish of wings whistled in his ears; he made an effort to listen, to concentrate—it was quite different from the whistling of shells—as if those wings swished round and round—circles vibrated on the smooth surface of water where a stone had been thrown—the bed began to move round in circles, too, and the whole world crashed into a boiling chaos about him.

2

He was sick for ten or twelve days. Exactly what was the matter with him they didn't know. Probably a combination of influenza and exhausted nerves.

The morning after he came, they found him asleep, his mouth open, snoring, gurgling. With great difficulty they awakened him; he drank some coffee, then fell back on the pillow, unable to move. "Let's leave him alone," said Uncle Rudi. "He's tired."

He continued to sleep sixteen or eighteen hours out of every twenty-four, and waking lay in a daze. On the fourth day he began to cough and had a high temperature.

"Grippe," said old Doctor Webler.

But by the middle of December he was well enough to go out and have a look around the city. He saw a few familiar faces, and met one or two old friends. An army captain stopped him in the street and told him to go to the city hall and be de-mobbed. He went and was handed his discharge papers. They were supposed to give him his back pay and some indemnity, but after going from office to office he got no money.

What am I to do now? What will become of me? The days passed, and he could see no light. Everything seemed out of gear—it was completely impossible to work out a plan for the future. As for what was going on in Budapest, he could make no sense out of it. Unnatural excitement hung in the air. You couldn't have guessed the war was over. Or was peace like this?

What mattered most was that he did not have a penny to his name. He had to start doing something—that was obvious. Aunt Anna gave him a korona every now and then, and Uncle Rudi dug out an old-fashioned morning coat, which he wore with a pair of old flannel trousers and his brown field-boots.

I must begin to do something, he kept repeating to himself as he wandered through the wintry streets. He roved about as much as he could, for he lived in constant fear that the old people, who almost never left the house, might ask him one day: "Aren't you going to do something for a living?" I am useless, helpless. Then he remembered, and laughed—in the fall of '17, at Simpieto, the Italian infantry had tried an attack on his line of trenches. The first trench was lost in no time, but he, with Dobos and Altmann and a fourth, grabbed a rickety machine-gun and put it in position. Maybe they hadn't done it all, but they helped to push back the Italians.

Funny, he wasn't useless then. He grinned. But what am I to do now? I am too late to register at the university. . . . Anyway I couldn't do it without money. What can I do? Two years at the front, a shot in the shoulder, two medals. . . . What can I buy with that? He queued up at the baker's, brought home the meat and sugar rations and whatever he could get from the tobacconist for Uncle Rudi. Once when he walked along the Ring he saw two officers sitting on little stools, shining shoes.

The days went by. It was a bitterly cold winter, and the world seemed to narrow down. Nothing happened. How could he make money? Start a business? You need capital for that, no matter how little. As he walked along the streets he read all the brass plates: Dr. X, Barrister; Dr. Y, Physician; Dr. Z, Civil Engineer. These people have their professions. Everyone seems to have something to do. You ought to be able to earn money somehow. Once in Innsbruck, after my shoulder was all right again, a lieutenant in the Fusiliers got me to play Rummy with him . . . what on earth was his name? . . . well, it doesn't matter. We played for three days almost all the time, except to eat and sleep, and I won three hundred korona in the end. I might have lost that much just as easily. Why don't I clean boots in the streets? . . .

He saw a large poster—a picture of a frowsy woman with a terrified expression on her face, her haggard arms stretched out, and underneath her the slogan: *Work harder, because the bread is giving out!* Not bad, he thought, stopping before the placard. Work harder. But where? . . . The trench opposite must be cleared. Sub-Lieutenant Kadar with two machine-guns . . . that

was good work and plenty of it . . . the trench-section on the Andrassy Avenue from Café Abbazia to Café Palermo must be cleared . . . Sub-Lieutenant Kadar with two machine-guns. . . . I can get a few more korona from Aunt Anna. I ought to buy a pair of socks, and I want to go to the Orpheum. . . . A girl in a dark blue, fur-collared coat and high-heeled boots came towards him. He stared straight into her eyes, and she stared back without blinking. As she passed he turned round and saw that she had stopped before a shop window pretending to be interested in it. But she looked at him out of the corner of her eye and smiled. Maybe she likes me, he thought. And maybe she is laughing because the tails of my cutaway are longer than my overcoat and I am wearing brown field-boots. The girl, as if she had had enough of the shop window, turned her head and walked on. He wondered for a moment whether to follow her, then slouched across to the other side of the street. I must make money somehow !

8

January came, and he heard nothing from his parents. The last letter from Torda had come about the beginning of August—a letter full of complaints: nobody bought books or stationery; they had let one of their three rooms to a law student named Kormos. Dad's summer rheumatism had been tormenting him. God bless you! God protect you!—they were all the same.

From that time on he had had no news from home. Of course, he knew that Torda was occupied by Roumanian troops and had no postal communication with the rest of

Hungary. He wrote two letters, but there was no reply. Trains did not run across the new frontier. For days at a time he did not think of his parents at all—just as he had not thought of them when he was at school. Sometimes months had gone by between letters, but in those days he knew for certain that all was well at home. Now there were days when rumors or newspaper stories threw him into a burning agony of fear.

Suddenly one evening he said to his aunt and uncle :
“ I’m going home to Torda.”

They were startled and bewildered. “For heaven’s sake, my dear boy, how can you ? The trains aren’t running.”

“ Oh, I’ll manage to slip across the border somehow.”

“ But . . . we can’t give you any money for . . .”

He showed them four ten-korona bills.

“ Where did you get that ? ”

“ My watch. What do I need a watch for ? ”

They could not dissuade him. Aunt Anna sobbed, the old man tried to appear stern but only succeeded in seeming grumpy. Finally they packed some worn-out underwear into his knapsack, he put his military great-coat on top of his cutaway and left.

The train did not run beyond Gyula. There he lingered for two days trying to find a way to slip across the border. He spent two nights on a bench in the public room of an inn ; the innkeeper was convinced that he was up to some mischief. He suspects I’m a thief or a deserter, he thought, and decided to take him into his confidence. The innkeeper, whose eyes, ears, big drooping moustache and swollen red nose all seemed to point permanently to the ground, looked up at him for a moment, removed his pipe, spat and turned away without a word. Later in the afternoon Kadar bought a flat, round loaf of rye

bread and a slice of smoked pork covered with a thick layer of paprika. That night he started out.

Heavy rain and sleet were falling. He trudged along, ankle deep in mud, but he was quite used to this sort of thing. He walked across wintry, barren fields in the dark, with the kind of sluggish, cautious step that made it possible for him to throw himself down flat at any moment. It was in the early dawn that he found himself suddenly confronted by a troop of strangely-uniformed soldiers. He gripped the loaf of bread between his knees and held up his arms. The Roumanian patrol surrounded him. For two hours he pushed along the slushy highway, a soldier with fixed bayonet on either side, until they reached at last a stable-like building. They pushed him through the door. Inside he found some twenty people lying on dirty straw, sleeping, grumbling, crying, stinking. He leaned against the wall of the shed. Next to him a little bearded Jew in a round black hat was sitting up on the straw, gazing at him with terrified eyes.

"Beg pardon, are you Hungarian, sir?" he asked in a plaintive sing-song voice.

Kadar nodded.

"Oi, my name is Spitzer . . . all I wanted was to take such a small bag of roasted coffee . . . *Gott im Himmel* . . . do you think they will shoot for that?"

Kadar had no opinion. He lay down on the straw; the stench gagged him. It was no use thinking. The soldiers had taken away his pocket-knife, his papers, the half loaf of bread, his knapsack and the remaining twenty-six korona. Now and then the door opened, for a few moments grey light forced its way into the darkness, a newcomer entered—stopped near the wall and strained his eyes in the darkness. The little Jew sat up again:

"My name is Spitzer . . . such a small bag of coffee . . . shoot me . . . ?"

One, two, three days passed, then he was led with ten or so others out into the sunlight under the hard, wintry sky. They were taken along a railroad to a whitewashed house and into a bare room. An hour went by, two hours, three. What would happen next?

At last he was pushed into another room. A long table littered with papers, inkstands, pens and pencils, around it a number of Roumanian officers, smoking, and with them an officer of another army. They spoke to Kadar in Roumanian. He could not understand a word. Then suddenly something flashed through his mind and he stepped to the table in front of the man in the foreign uniform—a young man with a fresh face, soft fair hair, clear blue eyes. He must be British—not any older than I am. He gripped the edge of the table and began:

"*Mister . . . Kamerad! Ich bin ein armer Student . . .*" he groped for understandable foreign words . . . "*Ich muss zu den Eltern . . . parents . . . père et mère . . .*"

The pale blue eyes smiled. "I see. You want to go to your parents?" he said in English.

"*Ja . . . yes . . .*"

"And your parents live in Roumania?"

He did not understand the question, but he ventured: "Roumania, Torda."

"I see, Torda. And you want to go there?"

He could not make this out, but he felt complete confidence in the Englishman. "Yes, yes!" he answered.

The officers began to argue sharply and loudly in Roumanian, English, French, of which Kadar could not understand a word. Arguments, deliberations, table-pounding. Instinct told him that the Englishman wanted

to let him go and the Roumanians refused. "I insist on it! I insist!" The English youngster's voice was shrill.

Finally he was led back to spend another night in the shed. I don't give a damn what happens. They may let me go, and then when I am ten paces away shoot me in the back. . . . He had heard such stories.

In the morning three soldiers with fixed bayonets dragged him and three or four others out of the shed. Spitzer was one of them. They were put on a peasant's cart and driven back along the road by which he had come. His knapsack and all his belongings were left behind. At last the cart stopped, and they got down. One of the soldiers pointed straight ahead. "March," he said, and as they started out he fired his rifle in the air.

When he reached Gyula again, he was weak from hunger; his head swam, there was a steady roar in his ears. He had had his last meal after the officers examined him—tasteless soup from a filthy pot and a sticky mess that might have been barley.

He sat down on a bench in the square. I will not drop in the gutter. He sat and sat—big coloured circles jumped about on the endless, grey sky. Opposite him stood a big house; an open window on the second floor was filled with bedclothes put out to air. If I buried my head in a feather bed I couldn't hear the roaring in my ears. On the large oval plate next to the door he saw *Borbala Kovik, Licensed Midwife*, and a picture of a stork carrying a baby in his beak. . . . A clever thing . . . to be born . . . born to starve to death. . . .

"By God! Is that you, Kadar?" The words sounded as if they came from another world. He looked up and blinked. It was Lechner—they had been together in the Albanian campaign. Questions, answers, reminiscences

passed back and forth over the bench opposite the bedclothes and the midwife's plate. Lechner lived in Gyula; just now he was foreman of the soldiers' council.

Lechner took him home, fed him black pudding and liverwurst, and made him comfortable. No one paid much attention to him otherwise. He had his sleep out in an old unused kitchen. The third day Lechner gave him fifty korona out of the ex-soldiers' relief fund at the town hall. Mother Lechner filled a ragged knapsack with sausages, bacon and a tin of lard. A train was leaving for Budapest.

Aunt Anna and Uncle Rudi could not believe their eyes when he turned up again. Uncle Rudi sniffed the lard. "It smells wonderful."

The days again went by in Budapest, and quickly at that. He sat most of the time in the diningroom and stared out of the window. He didn't care. It was peaceful there, and his money would last a long while at that rate. Peaceful—that was the thing. Lechner was a good sport, and that English officer was too. So were Feledy and Altmann and the two others who had dysentery. On the whole there are a good many nice people in the world . . . but if possible, they shouldn't be imposed on. Peaceful . . . peaceful. . . . The winter will be over soon . . . and the war is over. Next autumn I'll try to register at the Technical Academy. I'll have to apply for a scholarship. Maybe I'll get it. I can stay with Aunt Anna as long as I like. . . . Perhaps, next summer, I'll go to Torda.

One evening Uncle Rudi came home beaming. "Well, my boy, I think I've fixed things up for you. This after-

noon in the Café Central I met my old friend Maxi Huber, the manager of the Metal Center, and it suddenly occurred to me to say to him, 'Listen here, Maxi,' I said, 'I have a nephew, an ex-officer and a fine, educated, reliable fellow,' I said . . ."

On the first of March Kadar received eighty korona from the cashier against a blue chit, and was given a desk in the Metal Center. Those four twenty-korona notes caused a curious change in him. I have earned, or rather, I am going to earn this money by honest work. And he felt that this was quite a different sort of money from that which used to come from Torda regularly on the first of each month and in return for which he had to study. It was different, too, from the few korona he used to earn in exchange for cramming some stupid youngster with math. and geography. Different from army pay for which he had to put up with lice and mud, lie in trenches, train a machine-gun in the direction of living men, and principally for which he had to be prepared to die gloriously but painfully at any minute. Different from the money he won at Rummy from the Fusilier Lieutenant, different from the forty korona the jeweller gave him for his watch. For this money he would have to work hard, regularly, ambitiously.

"I expect honest, productive work from you, my boy," Huber said as he showed him his desk. And that night when he reached home he said to Uncle Rudi: "I think I'll have a chance to do some honest, productive work. . . ."

At the office he came to know the other men and slowly began to understand the post-war language. All day he sat over coloured slips of paper, ruled sheets and figure columns, and although he was unable to grasp the cause

and effect of these figures, he knew that the amounts had only one meaning—a meaning expressed by a figure invisibly written somewhere between the lines: Profit. And in a few days he knew in plain words the desire that his first regular salary created in him: I must make a profit, earn a lot of money; I must be rich and live well. The great question was, of course, whether it was possible to earn much money by bending over a desk day after day, year after year. He looked at the others. These men had not succeeded in making a fortune by honest, productive work. Is it, then, dishonest, unproductive work that makes fortunes?

On the twenty-first of March red flags sprang out suddenly from windows and flagstuffs, and the aspect of the whole city changed remarkably within a few hours. Riots swept through the streets, unrest was in the air.

Someone hinted that Kadar had been sent to the Metal Center with a mission. He held his tongue, and his silence confirmed the suspicion. One day he was unanimously elected "political commissary" for the department. He had no idea what this was supposed to be, or what he was expected to do about it, but he made no protest. His election, however, was not confirmed by the mysterious powers above, for they did not know him and had no means of finding out whether or not he was a trustworthy communist. He was relieved. During those two days in office he had gone about in constant fear that somebody might ask him a question he could not possibly answer.

He came with the others every morning to the office, but he did no work, because there was none to do. The new "political commissary" who was delegated from outside, and the new department manager who replaced

Huber, arranged meetings and made speeches. As for work, instructions were expected from the Communist Headquarters, but none ever arrived.

Kadar listened to the speeches and discussions that filled the office like spring floods. He heard and absorbed things that were entirely new to him, words that rang in his ears as if they were spoken in a foreign language: "Ideology, Mentality of the Proletariat, Class Hegemony, Orthodox Marxism, Soviet Republic, Capitalism, Productive Labor, Counter-Revolution"—all empty words. He took part in none of the discussions. Words, words, words that were so far from reality and had nothing to do with that particular part of reality called wealth or comfortable living.

Whatever spare time he had, he spent with his uncle and aunt. He told them about the office, about the people there and the welter of empty talk; and he did his best to laugh away their misgivings.

In April his salary was raised to two hundred korona, in May to five hundred; but it was paid in the worthless "White money," issued in vast quantities by the Communist Government. Nothing could be bought with it in the shops. Then he knew for certain that things could not go on as they were; life was not worth living that way.

Towards the end of May—it was a brilliant early summer day—he returned from the office in the afternoon. Uncle Rudi sat glumly at the table, and Aunt Anna's eyes were red from crying.

"Is anything wrong?"

"Toni . . . this noon Mariska Gazda came—you know, from Torda. She is married to an Italian officer who is in Budapest for the Inter-Allied Mission. . . ."

Mariska Gazda from Torda. A cold fear took hold of

his throat. "What is the matter? Mother and Father . . . they are dead." He did not ask; he made a statement.

"Yes, in November; it was the grippe. First your father. Your poor mother went two days later. . . ."

Dead. Suddenly a thin, child's cry escaped his throat. With a terrible effort he forced back a sob and pressed his lips tight together. His dry eyes were burning. He stood a moment, then turned and left the room. In the hall he sat down on the bench beneath the mirror, his head between his fists. The thin, childish cry burst from him again and choked him. The old people came and tried to comfort him.

Back in the diningroom they sat around the table in silence. Aunt Anna sighed now and then and dried her eyes. Uncle Rudi glanced covertly at him. He stopped crying and sat with clenched teeth. Finally he asked: "How did it happen?" Then he saw that he had been left alone in the room. The maid came in to make his bed. As soon as she had finished he lay down. Half-waking, half-dreaming, he saw the small stationery store with his father standing behind the counter, doing figures in a little book, a black skull-cap on his head. . . . He sat on a tiny stool in the drawingroom at home, a slice of bread and jam in his hand, while his parents had an argument. They shouted angrily at each other, but he could not understand what it was all about. . . . Once—he was quite a little boy then—Father put his arm around Mother's waist, pulled her close, and kissed her. This happened at the old house in the garden. A hot wave of terror and anger swept over him, and with a toy rake he hit furiously at one of the shiny green globes that ornamented the stakes among the rose bushes. The globe broke into a thousand pieces, and Father and

Mother looked at him, frightened and perplexed. . . . He saw his mother lying very ill—this too was a very long time ago—a little sister was born, but she died a few hours later. . . . Ferko Tiszta, the son of the baker, who sat next to him at school, told him something funny: “If a man and a woman. . . .” He could scarcely wait until Father came home. “Daddy, Ferko Tiszta told me that if a man and a woman. . . . Is it true?” “It’s silly nonsense! There’s no such thing! I’ll teach that little scoundrel. . . .” And then one day he found out for himself that there is such a thing. Juliska, the curate’s daughter—he held her hand—he told his mother all about it—even about kissing Juliska’s neck in the cherry orchard—and mother said: “It doesn’t matter. It’s all right. Only you must not think of these things when you ought to be studying. . . .” And the last few days at home in 1916. Father paced up and down in the store, saying, “The country demands sacrifices from all of us, and everyone has to do his duty.” And Mother, with her thousand fears and thoughtfulnesses. She made cheese-dumplings for the farewell dinner and gave him a gold piece in a small linen bag. . . . He did not know which was memory, which a dream. . . . The next morning he did not go to the office. He sat silent in the diningroom. Outside the sun shone, and a troop of school children passed the house, singing loudly.

Towards noon Mariska Gazda came. She sat down beside him, and after a few minutes the old people left her alone with him.

“There was a terrible epidemic of grippe, ever since the beginning of August, but they were all right then, except that they complained about having no news from you. Awful stories went around—there were a lot of

deserters in town. They said that Tiszta's son—you remember Ferko Tiszta—deserted, but they caught him and killed him. But everybody knew the poor boy wasn't quite right. Then the Roumanian invasion. It was horrible to see those soldiers coming. . . . Nobody dared to go out in the streets. One day a patrol went into your store to search for maps. Your father didn't want to give them up, so they turned the whole place upside down, and naturally they found all sorts of maps—school atlases and things. They arrested him and beat him too, and kept him in the barracks for five days. Your poor mother stood outside the barracks the whole time, from early morning till late at night. They wouldn't let her in and she wouldn't go home. Finally they let your father out, because he had a high fever—he caught a cold in the barracks. He died three days later. When the coroner came, he sent your mother to the hospital, but two days later . . .”

Mariska was crying. He took her hand.

“Toni, there was almost nothing left in the store, and the furniture. . . .”

“I know,” he said. “We were poor.” He looked at her with dry eyes, then went and stared out of the window. Brilliant sun. Two heavy lorries trundled slowly through the street.

“Toni, Toni, it is a ghastly world.”

“Yes, ghastly. The Roumanians beat my father, but they left my skin whole.” He looked at Mariska. She wore a grey smart dress and shoes. “What about yourself, Mariska? I hear you are married to an Italian. Why didn't you bring him with you?”

Mariska looked away. “He is very busy at the Mission, because we must leave to-morrow for Vienna. . . .”

She turned round suddenly and said in a whisper: "Toni, I couldn't tell your aunt and uncle, but I . . ."

"Well, what?"

"You see, Toni, I'm not married to Julio. I am only. . . ." Her face flushed, and she hesitated. "I am only living with him for the time being. You see," she whispered hurriedly to get it over with, "the Roumanians took away Father's drug-store, and we went to Brasso. An Inter-Allied Military Mission was there. I could speak Roumanian and German and French, besides Hungarian, so I applied for a job as typist at the Mission. That is how I met Julio—he is handsome and terribly nice. He got me a job and we fell in love with each other. Really, Toni, Father and Mother like him too—as if they were his own parents. And now he has a new appointment in Vienna and is taking me with him. As soon as he gets his leave, we are going to his people in Italy and get married there."

"How old is he?"

"Thirty. He's a dear, Toni. His family own a big paint factory."

"And how old are you?"

"You know perfectly well I'm twenty-four."

"And . . . are you quite sure he is going to marry you?"

"Of course I am." But the question touched a tender spot, and she said suddenly: "What about you, Toni?"

The old people came in. Mariska turned to them: "Uncle Rudi, my husband wants me to ask whether he can be of any assistance to you. Perhaps you need a permit of some sort . . . or money?"

"My dear child," said Aunt Anna, "what could we

need? What we want is better times, and only the good Lord can give us that."

Toni turned away from the window: "Mariska, take me with you to Vienna."

Mariska looked away. "I can ask Julio, Toni, but I'm afraid that the Mission. . . ."

"I'm sorry," he interrupted. "I know it can't be done. I only meant . . . I only asked you because. . . ."

They talked for a while, and then Mariska left. The next morning two detectives came to find out about the lady who was connected with the Inter-Allied Mission, and why she had been to see them. Aunt Anna was frightened and began to cry. "She is our cousin. Can't we even see our relatives in peace?" The detectives sniffed around the apartment, made some notes, and then went away.

For three days Kadar stayed at home. Sometimes he shuddered at the thought that they had beaten his father, then he began to forget. Lieutenant Kauser used to have his men flogged, even if it was forbidden. So the Italian was going to marry Mariska. Why shouldn't he? She was pretty. He remembered that once—when he was about seventeen—he had kissed her in the dispensary behind her father's drug-store, at the end of summer. . . .

He went back to the office. The hours passed in deadly boredom, like a warm, oily stream. From time to time some excited argument broke out, but it was all meaningless. World Revolution, Counter-Revolution, Socialisation—the words filled the air, exploded, and died away in the vacuum of indifference. He never took part in the disputes; he knew it was futile.

One day the report spread that the counter-revolution had broken out, that monitors in the Danube were

shelling the Soviet buildings, and the Commissaries had taken to their heels. Everybody scuttled out of the office. Kadar walked slowly through the empty streets under the sunny afternoon sky. Good God, the whole world is crazy. What is the use of going home and sitting in the diningroom, or bending over a rickety desk, boring myself with senseless, useless work, hoping for something to turn up? What can I expect? What am I waiting for? Shall I be a sculptor, bank manager, or farmer? . . . I'm twenty years old. I'm neither a boy nor a man. And there is nobody, nothing, absolutely nothing, that means anything to me. . . .

When he reached home the front door was locked, and a crowd of people stood arguing with the concierge. A well-dressed man explained that they only wanted to stay inside until things quieted down in the streets. "Do you think, my friend, that it gives me pleasure to stand about in this doorway? I've a family waiting at home. . . ."

Kadar stood looking on. Somebody put a hand on his arm. "Kadar! Is it you?" Vavrinetz—he had known him in school. "I say, do you live in this house?"

"Yes."

"Listen. Could you possibly put me up for the night, or could I stay with you for just a day or two until . . ."

"What on earth is the matter?"

"I'll tell you about it inside."

The old people eyed the stranger with alarm, and went out of the diningroom. After a long silence Vavrinetz finally began: "Can I speak frankly? . . . I don't dare go out on the street again until things are settled one way or the other. You see, I am a member of the Highland group of Insurgents——." He unbuttoned the top of his waistcoat and turned it inside out; a badge was stuck on

to the lining, a double white cross on a green shield, and the royal crown over it.

"So," said Kadar, not much surprised, "you are a counter-revolutionary? Why aren't you with your group, or whatever you call it?"

"You see, I was just going to a meeting when I saw that the bridge was guarded by red troops and an armoured car was coming from the direction of the Parliament. . . ."

"And so you jumped into the nearest doorway for shelter, and you will sneak out again after your side has won. Is that it?"

Vavrinetz turned red, then pale. "For God's sake," he gasped. "You're not a communist, are you?"

Kadar looked at him and wanted to laugh. "Communist! Lord, no! But if you think I have any sympathy for a counter-revolutionary who hides in a safe dugout until. . . . Tell me, were you in the army?"

Vavrinetz was still as pale as a whitewashed wall. "No," he said weakly, "I wasn't fit; don't you remember?"

"And what have you been doing all this time?"

"For two years I've been going to Technology School—engineering."

"So. . . . Well, I'll go ask my aunt if you may stay to-night."

Aunt Anna did not like the idea—the detectives were still preying on her mind—but he begged until he persuaded her. "We can't possibly get into trouble over it," he assured her. He did not mention the insurgent badge on Vavrinetz's coat.

"It's all right—you can stay." Vavrinetz mumbled his thanks, and both of them were silent.

They had not seen each other since the beginning of the War. Vavrinetz used to sit in the back seat of the middle row at school, and he knew a trick; he could imitate snoring so that the sound seemed to come from the front. That was good fun, especially when Berta, who sat in the front row, got into trouble on account of the noise.

Vavrinetz began to speak again, but his words were guarded, as if he were afraid of giving himself away. "Fortunately most of the students . . . or rather, very few of them are really red, but they whistle the tune and the rest have to dance." He was living in Old Buda with his parents, who owned a small house with a little garden at the back. "Everything would be all right if only these rotten times would be over. But it won't be long. . . . What about yourself? What have you been doing?"

Shall I tell him that I was on the Italian front; that I had a shell-splinter in my shoulder and lay in a hospital at Innsbruck; that two weeks after I got well I was back in the trenches; that I was eaten up by lice and killed men; that little Feledy died in the train; that I tried to get home to Torda? . . .

"Not much. I'm working in an office. It's not really work. I just vegetate—waiting for something to turn up."

For the first time Vavrinetz drew a free breath. "I see. You are waiting for this bolshevik nonsense to end?"

"Put it that way if you like. I'm waiting for something to happen. I want to learn. I want to make money. Do you see what I mean?"

Vavrinetz nodded with a wry grin. "I swear, Toni, you gave me an awful scare for a while. I thought sure you were a communist, and like an ass I was spilling everything. I might have landed myself in jail."

Kadar did not answer, and Vavrinetz grew uneasy.

"I hope you weren't just keeping me in suspense. . . ."

"Look here," said Kadar quietly. "I'm no communist, but I'm no counter-revolutionary either. I had enough trouble at the front . . . but, you can't understand that. And now, why should I expect that your party will get anything done? So far everybody has lied—militarists, pacifists, socialists, bolsheviks—everything they promised was lies." Vavrinetz kept an icy silence. "Look here," Kadar went on, "the whole world is sick. This country and Russia and all of them. The War did it, and it will take a long time for us to be cured. We will have to get together—the reds and whites and everybody."

"That's a pretty lukewarm way of looking at things." Vavrinetz gave a sarcastic laugh. "But anyway, I hope that for old times' sake I needn't be afraid that . . ."

Aunt Anna came in to lay the table. They had vegetable marrow and macaroni for dinner. It was a silent meal. Afterwards she brought in some bedclothes and spread them on the sofa.

Early in the morning Vavrinetz stood fully dressed by the window, looking out into the street. "I've been waiting for you to wake up. Watched the streetcars for an hour. Now I can leave."

Kadar put on his clothes. The old people were not up, but the maid brought in two cups of tea and two slices of bread.

"I don't know. Maybe I should wait till your uncle and aunt get up. Or will you thank them for me?" No, it would be quite all right if he went away now. "Just one more thing. . . . There are still a lot of red patrols in the street. They may stop me and look at my papers.

You can't be too careful. Couldn't I leave this here, just for a day or two; I'll come and get it, maybe to-day." He held out his hand with the green badge in the palm of it.

"No," said Kadar flatly. "You can't leave it here. This is not my house, and I won't risk getting my relatives into trouble. If you don't want to wear it, throw it into the ventilator pipe, or down the toilet."

"Thank you," Vavrinetz's voice was hard and cold, "I won't do that." He hesitated for a moment. "Anyway, I have two more badges buried in the backyard at home. . . . Maybe I'll just drop this one down the ventilator after all." They left the house together and parted in the street.

Towards the middle of July Kadar received a summons for military service in the red army. The Hungarian troops were hard pressed by the Roumanians on the Tisza River. He reported to the political commissary and asked for a medical examination.

"I feel dizzy, and I've got a terrible headache. I don't know what's wrong." He did not mention the military summons. At home he told Aunt Anna: "Here is the summons, but I'm not going. I've had enough fighting. I'm going to bed and I'll stay there until they come after me or something happens. If you are worried, I'll go to a hospital. If they don't let me in, I'll collapse in the street. But I will not ever enlist again." Aunt Anna was terrified, but she would not let him go to a hospital.

So he went to bed. Next morning, when he awoke in the bright sunshine, he stretched himself and laughed. I'll wait for something to happen—comfortably in bed. Aunt Anna pretended to be nursing him. The maid was told that he had a very high temperature and that some-

thing had gone wrong with his lungs. She would spread the news among all the servants in the building—it was better if the whole house knew about it in case enquiries were made.

Five or six days later the political commissary sent someone to find out what was the matter with him. He lay in bed, covered to his chin, in the stifling heat. The visitor was Kuhnert, a lanky blond young Swabian who boasted that he was an illegitimate child of a charwoman, and had worked his way up from poverty. There was not a word of truth in the illegitimacy or in the charwoman mother, but the youngster was saturated with proletarian ideas and invented the story out of pride. Kuhnert stopped at the door and looked at Kadar sweating like a pig under his hot blanket.

“Hello, Comrade Kadar,” said Kuhnert. “What’s wrong?”

Kadar did not answer, but forced a great dry cough, and then as if he had just come out of a coma he sat up in bed with great difficulty.

“Comrade Kuhnert . . . what is happening at the office?” he groaned.

“Don’t worry about the office,” Kuhnert’s voice was troubled. “How are you? That’s all that matters.”

He waved his hand weakly and coughed again. Kuhnert was thoroughly alarmed. “It really is something serious?”

“I’m afraid it is. . . . I may get over it . . . it’s an after effect of the War.” He had to clamp down his laughter, while Kuhnert watched him with frightened eyes. He left soon, convinced that poor Kadar would probably die before morning.

No one else came to enquire. Although he could have

got up without fear of being caught, he stayed in bed. I'll play it out, he decided, and it occurred to him that he was really lying in bed in order to avoid doing anything at all. It was pleasant to sleep through these days of uncertainty, to do nothing but watch the small square of blue sky through the window. There was something strangely familiar in this sky-gazing: the hospital train crawls along slowly . . . the engine creeps uphill. Someone in the berth above is breathing heavily and gurgling—he is shot through the stomach. Through the small window of the carriage gleams a fragment of the cold Alpine sky. . . . It is much better to lie here, comfortable and whole, waiting . . . anyway there is no fear now of gangrene setting in.

5

A few days later the Proletarian Dictatorship came to an end. Kadar got up as soon as he heard it. He felt a little weak after two weeks in bed, but he went to the office. There he found senseless disorder. Four ex-soldiers had given the political commissary a dreadful hiding, and left him, covered with blood, till the ambulance came to collect him. Those who had shouted during the communist régime had better stay away from now on. The old managers of the Metal Center who had been shoved aside under the Dictatorship were back, and all employees who had not participated in the bolshevist movement were to be rehabilitated. No matter what happened next, one thing was certain—the crimes of the Dictatorship must be avenged. By some strange transformation, within a few hours everybody seemed to have become a victim of the proletariat rule.

But early in September the government liquidated the Metal Center. Most of the employees, Kadar among them, were given notice to quit work on the first of October. He read the written order with a feeling of release.

At home he told the old people that he had been given notice and intended to study architecture in the Technological Academy. His papers were all in order, and one autumn morning he stood at the gate of the Academy. Things seemed anything but peaceful, small groups of youngsters shouting arguments, a large crowd on the embankment, an ambulance with its green pennant, a detachment of Roumanian soldiers. At the gate a couple of young men with a new sort of round cap on their heads stood and stared at him.

“Matriculation?”

“Yes.”

“Go ahead.”

As he reached the large open staircase at the far end of the hall, he was surrounded by students. “Toni Kadar!” he suddenly heard a familiar voice. Hugo Vavrinetz. For a second they looked each other in the eye, then Vavrinetz pointed at him and yelled at the top of his voice: “Communist swine!”

Before he knew what was happening, two violent blows caught him on the jaw, and another like a bullet on the shoulder. The next moment he was lying on the stone floor. The last thing he felt was a terrific kick in his side; then he fainted.

For two days he was delirious; incessantly he saw Vavrinetz pointing at him and heard him shouting: “Communist swine!” Later he came to and was better. The blow of a rubber truncheon had cracked his collar

bone, but the break mended quickly, and the kick left only a purple-green patch the size of a boot-sole.

Aunt Anna and Uncle Rudi found him lying peacefully in the hospital bed. 'He refused to tell them how it had happened.

"Toni, Toni," Aunt Anna cried, "it's the Lord's punishment on you for pretending to be sick."

"It may be the Lord's punishment, Aunt Anna, but I have a feeling that it may turn out to be a good thing."

Twenty-four patients lay in the room with him—mostly convalescents after operations. The others had been hurt in street accidents. What was this tranquil place, compared to field dressing stations and first aid posts? Here was no one with sockets instead of eyes, with intestines dangling out, with half his face torn off, with convulsions from shell shock and poison gas. He could lie here in peace, gazing at the high whitewashed ceiling or a bit of blue sky through the top panes of the window.

Vavrinetz had me thrashed. He called me communist swine—that was because of the green badge he had to throw into the ventilator. . . . I shall try again to matriculate, unless I am too late. . . . I don't think Vavrinetz hit me. They might have struck me on the head; the Italians didn't ask where they could shoot me, and they hit me in the shoulder; they could just as well have shot me in the head. I'll get well. I'll study hard and earn a lot of money . . . later. Maybe I'll look up Mariska Gazda in Vienna or in Italy. I can go to Italy now that the War is over. It's peace now. Communism is dead. I can begin to live. . . .

One of the nurses, a tall dark-haired girl called Agota, came to see him often during the day, and when she was on night duty she would sit for hours at the end of his

bed, talking quietly under the blue light. Sometimes it was dawn when he fell asleep, but he never felt tired—after all, he could sleep during the day and for as long as he liked. She has a pretty face, he thought, and nice hands with long straight fingers. How can she touch sick people? Her hair is black, and you can see under her hood that she wears it in whirls over her ears. She is not quite as tall as I am.

One night he took her arm so that his fingers touched her breast. She did not seem to mind—she even pressed his hand against her side. After that she did not sit at the end of the bed, but closer to him so that he could reach out to her. Sometimes he held her hands half the night, and if he touched her breast deliberately, she did not move away. When he was sent home, he said to her: "Thank you for being so good to me. Couldn't you come out some day with me . . . for a walk?"

One Sunday afternoon he went to meet her at the hospital. She wore a brown suit with a brown felt hat. The sun shone and the air was fine and warm. Would she like to go to the theatre?

"No, it's too nice out. Let's go for a walk instead. Or let's have some coffee at a confectioner's. We can go to a movie after that." Then she added, "I've got some money," and laughed.

He turned red. "What do you mean? I've money enough for that!"

They wandered along the Rakoczi Avenue to the Park. The paths between the green patches of lawn were crowded with people. Children ran back and forth; a fat woman sat on one of the benches, nursing a black-haired baby.

"If only I could have a child," said Agota, and linked

her arm in his, "but I can't, I'm afraid." How warm her arm feels.

"Why can't you?" Stupid, tactless question, but she was not embarrassed.

"I can't because . . . it can't be done, silly. Once I nearly had one, . . . and that's why I can't have another."

A hot wave rushed over him. Once she nearly had . . . that meant that she had already. . .

They sat down on a bench and he thought over and over—once she nearly had a child. He put his arm round her and drew her nearer. It was beginning to get dark. He kissed her. Her lips were parted, willing—soft and cool and sweet. Suddenly she stood up.

"I don't like this," she said. "It's what servant girls do—here in the park, on a bench. Let's go to a movie."

The theatre was hot and crowded, and the air was foul. She laughed at the picture, and they held hands. When it was over they went to a café and had coffee with bad cheese-tarts.

"Well, now we can go home," she said.

"Home?" his voice trembled.

"Yes, home, silly," she laughed. "Not to your house, of course—to my room. Unless you don't want to."

He took her arm without answering. . . . We are going home. . . . Her room was large and clean, and very full of furniture. He noticed that the sofa showed signs of being used as a bed.

"Aren't you living alone?"

"Of course not, silly. My sister lives with me. She's a nurse too, but she has three days' leave and has gone to Palota to see her fiancé." She laughed lightly, took

off her dress and put on a negligée, then dashed about arranging things, and brought some cold food from the small kitchen. When he sat down at the table she came and put her arms around him.

"Do you know that you can't leave me till to-morrow morning? It's forbidden to be in the streets after midnight. . . . I'm glad."

He woke at daybreak. A heavy truck creaked as it trundled by . . . then silence. Agota's head lay on his outstretched arm. She was sleeping with her lips pressed tightly together. He watched her—her loose dark hair, her handsome oval face, dim and pale in the half-darkness.

God, how did I come to her—to anyone so good? They hit me, they cracked my shoulder, they kicked me out. . . . Can I go back and say to them: "Gentlemen, there must be some mistake. I am Antal Kadar, Sub-Lieutenant in the War, one wound in the shoulder, a small and a large silver medal and the Charles Cross for Combatants; twenty-one years old, Reformed Protestant faith? I have never been a communist, and Hugo Vavrinetz, an old schoolmate of mine, can prove it if he will. I want to be one of you. I want to study, to be an architect, to earn my living. I have a little talent, I think. You won't be ashamed of me. . . ."

His arm twitched, and the movement woke the girl. She sat up, looked at him with great, half frightened eyes, then a laugh bubbled out of her throat, and she lay down again close to him.

At half-past seven they left the house together. During the night clouds had gathered, and now the rain drizzled steadily. She put her arm through his, and chattered foolish, tender things.

"Thursday is my next afternoon off. If you come for me after lunch, we will go straight home. We don't need to go anywhere else, do we, Toni darling? I'll ask Marta to go on night duty instead of me; she'll do it—I always do for her. Won't it be nice, my sweet?"

When he reached home, the old people were in the diningroom. Aunt Anna had dark circles under her eyes from lack of sleep.

"Toni, Toni! where have you been? I couldn't close my eyes all night, I was so worried. You're not well yet!"

"There's nothing wrong, Aunt Anna, but . . ." he stopped and looked intently at the shabby carpet. Vavrinetz could put things right for him, but he wouldn't. On the contrary. . . .

"Aunt Anna, I've something to tell you. Last night—the whole night I was discussing, considering things. I am going to the Vienna Academy. You know I haven't a dog's chance of passing the entrance exam. here. But I wouldn't even try. . . . I'm twenty-one now, and I must begin to do something for my living."

Uncle Rudi listened suspiciously. He felt that something was being held back. Aunt Anna began to protest: "For Heaven's sake, child, how do you think you could manage in a strange city? Where will you get the money? Where will you stay?"

"But what can I do here? How can I earn a living? How long can I go on imposing on you? You know how hard I tried and what came of it in the end. I was let out at the Metal Center—can you get me another job?" The flood of arguments began to ebb.

"Out there it was different, after all," said Uncle Rudi. "They didn't ask him in the army how he

thought he could manage in a strange place. Let him do as he thinks best. He's a grown man."

At noon he went to the Metal Center. Huber had apparently pulled wires for he was handed his indemnity money—two thousand korona in crisp new bills. I can live a long time in Vienna on this. It will cost a few hundreds to get there. Aunt Anna won't take a penny for all they've done for me. . . . I can live a long time. . . .

The next day he went to the police to apply for a passport. Within an hour it was in his hands. On the line opposite the words *Countries for which this passport is valid*, the officer had written "Europe." Europe! I am travelling in Europe. I'm travelling into life!

The Austrian visa was not such an easy matter. He had to stand in line for hours, and when finally he entered the passport office, a short, bearded individual refused to give him a visa: "We don't need any more mouths to feed. I can't let you enter Austria without proof that you can support yourself." He pulled out the roll of bills; the bearded man looked at it, then began to laugh. "You child! that's no proof. Now run along, and don't take up any more of my time."

At the bottom of the stairs a fat, ginger-haired man sidled up to him. "No visa, eh?" he asked. "Give me your passport, young man, and wait for me by that pillar. Twenty korona and expenses."

He did not hesitate. The fat man took his passport and two twenty-korona notes and left him walking round and round the pillar. After a while he appeared with the passport and some small change.

"If you or any of your friends need a visa at any time, you will always find me here or at the Czech consulate. Ask for Bruckner."

Early the next morning he went to the station to find out about trains. Because of the coal shortage only one train a day left for Vienna—at seven o'clock in the morning. So there was no need to decide which one to take. He breathed the station smells and train smells, and felt the thrill of travelling, he wandered up and down the great entrance hall and tried to reach the platform, but the door was locked. He entered the third class waiting room—through the window he could see a few empty cars. He was going to travel, he was going to escape—to Vienna, to Europe, to life.

On the way home he bought four shirts, four drawers, four pairs of socks, a tie, a half-dozen collars, and a grey winter overcoat. He walked on slowly, and when he reached home the package had arrived. He unwrapped it and sorted out the articles on the dining table, brought all his belongings in from the wardrobe in the hall, played with them like a child with toy soldiers. Aunt Anna watched him with sad eyes.

“I can't believe you are really going to leave us, Toni.” She disappeared, and came back with a big brown leather suitcase. “Look, Toni, your uncle used to take this when he went on inspection tours . . . you can have it now—to bring you luck.”

He nodded gratefully. She watched him as he toyed with odds and ends.

“You're not packing already? I have to get your things washed and mended!”

He was leaving just as soon as everything was ready. He would buy his ticket to-morrow. Aunt Anna set the maid scurrying about in the kitchen with wash tubs, and began to brush coats, remove stains, and sew on buttons.

A long time ago, before examinations, he used to live

in precisely such an excited state as this. Where had he got the idea of going to Vienna? How had he decided so suddenly? When he lay there beside Agota, while she was still asleep, he had made up his mind that it was no use trying anything more in Budapest. There was nothing for him to do in Budapest—nothing in Torda. At Innsbruck he knew only the military hospital. He would have to go to Vienna. . . . It isn't far. I've never been to Vienna. It is a big city, and they will surely let me into the Technical Academy . . . Sub-Lieutenant Kadar, filled with yearning for study, money, life—the opposite trench section has to be taken by hook or crook. . . .

On Thursday after lunch, as Uncle Rudi was about to go for his afternoon nap, he drew him aside. "Uncle Rudi, I'm . . . I'm not coming home to-night."

"Well, why not?"

"There's a . . . I've got somebody . . . and since I'm going away so soon . . ."

"I see," Uncle Rudi looked away embarrassed. "All right. You can do as you like. I'll tell your aunt that. . . ."

He went with a high heart through sunlit streets to the hospital. She has rich, black hair, fresh and fragrant. He stopped suddenly. Shall I tell her I am leaving—that maybe never again? . . . A dull pain started in his heart. At last I have someone . . . and now I am going. Oh God—Father and Mother are gone, Mariska came and left, little Feledy is gone, Aunt Anna and Uncle Rudi have been so good to me, and I am leaving Agota too. . . .

She came skipping through the hospital gates, wearing the same brown dress, a small parcel in her hand. "That's my lunch. They packed it up for me because I

told them I couldn't eat—had a stomachache. I had a bath, too, that made me late. You know, nurses can have a hot bath every day." She put her arm through his, chattering and laughing. Suddenly she turned to him :

"What's the matter, Toni? Why are you so sad?"

"Sad? Nothing's the matter." He forced a grin.

"You can't fib to me. Tell me what's bothering you."

He was afraid it would slip out : I'm going to leave you. And to keep it back, words began to trickle from his lips, like water from a cracked bowl. He talked faster and faster, trying to drown thoughts of the future in the stream of the past. He told her how he went to war. The lazy autumn sunshine colored the fine dust of the street with gold—he could see in its glittering the pictures of that year—how was it? . . . The company marched to the station singing. Most of them were youngsters his age; 1898 was a rich year. All they knew was how to handle a rifle, form fours, march to the rhythm of bugles and drums—and how to revile slackers. They were sent first to Albania to get used to hardship before they saw real war. A stifling burnt-out country—carcasses of horses, corpses of a few hanged peasants, and then malaria. He saw the sea for the first time in his life at Durazzo. The weeks passed tranquilly; those who did not die lived like dukes. One day there was a skirmish between Italian and Austro-Hungarian battleships. The Italian fleet wanted to take Durazzo by storm; shells exploded in the town. It was then that he saw his first man killed in action—a wretched peasant who met a hero's death on the highway, squashed into a shapeless mass under a tree that had been hit by a shell.

Then came the command to move on at once. We are on the way to the Italian hell, they guessed. The train

started, was switched, moved on again, day after day. The heat in the overcrowded cars was unbearable. Now they passed through lovely country—wooded mountains, blue lakes, rushing streams, a sawmill or two. He had never seen such beauty.

The train stopped at Udine, and they got out. Two days' rest and some very good brandy. The second night they were sent into the firing line. He admired the ingenuity with which the trenches were built. This was a quiet interlude; every now and then a Verey-light went up and descended slowly; that was all.

But at dawn things broke loose. An internal cacophony went on incessantly all day, all night. An interval of quiet came for an hour or so, but they had been so completely deafened by the unending roar that the silence meant nothing. The diabolic noise began again. Maddening. Feri Galambos sat on the floor of the trench and cried, gasping for breath, screaming. Feri Galambos was just over eighteen. They took him back and gave him an injection. Dani Bokor, a carpenter's apprentice from Torda, just eighteen years old, sat on the floor of the trench and wept. Injection.

Kadar felt his stomach, his chest, his throat quivering. He could not eat, only drink. He could stand it no longer—and then it started again.

One day—used to it all by now—Feri Galambos sits on the floor-boards of the trench, takes off his puttees and examines them intently with his short-sighted eyes. He is hunting for lice . . . They have learned by now to tell by the sound the difference between shrapnel, the timed shell of field guns, mortar ammunition, and the shells of Italian howitzers. They have taken the positions that they automatically take when they hear these sounds.

You can get used to almost anything—even to full hits in the trench, even to comrades with horrible bleeding wounds and bloody shreds of flesh in place of limbs.

At last one evening: "Sub-Lieutenant Kadar and four men . . . volunteers?" . . . When he returned he had convulsions of laughter, sobbing, giggling. One night they were sent out again with steel helmets, wire clippers, hand grenades. He had already learned to see in the dark. As he crawled forward on his belly, he saw something stirring ahead. He rested his body on his left elbow, raised himself slightly, and his right arm flung a hand grenade. An explosion, hard dry lumps of earth thrown in his face, then up and at them! When he reached the first Italian trench he sent off another grenade, and another. Once he saw a film—Blasting in a Stone Quarry in Colorado, U.S.A.—it was something like this. A dark figure lay at the bottom of the trench. He turned his torch on it. Italian. He seized a shoulder and raised it, but the head did not move with the body; where the face should have been was a dirty, crimson mass. He had no time to wonder. The Italians launched a counter-attack, a second, a third, a tenth. Suddenly he felt a rough blow on his shoulder, and the next minute a thousand needles seemed to be gouging at the spot. . . . First aid post—a short fat man in a dirty uniform bends over him. "Bone to the right," he says; the ambulance men lay him on the floor to the right. "Shot through the stomach to the left . . . lungs to the left . . . bones to the right . . . dead to the left. . . ."

The men on the right-hand side were taken away to Innsbruck, base hospital. Here it was pleasant. A smell of medicine filled the large room—like Gazda's drug-store in Torda. Some of the nurses were pretty.

One of them was old, with dyed hair. Her specialty was outrageous dirty stories . . . you died of laughing . . . she was said to be a countess.

After a while he could go out to a tavern where beer was cheap. At the back a narrow staircase led up to some rooms—a girl in each room—for very little money. . . .

Then back to the trenches, and the old story began all over again. In the front line no one knew what day of the week it was. Later they forgot which month. Food got worse and worse. The setting sun painted the Alpine rocks scarlet—too bad I'm not an artist. . . . Chocolate, chocolate, and more chocolate. I never thought I could loathe the sight of chocolate. Italian airmen dropped leaflets . . . Trecka, the Czech corporal was executed . . . then it was all over. Vegetable marrow. Dysentery. Little Feledy wrapped in his coat. Gipsy band at Fehervar. Budapest, the dead city. . . . Agota knew the rest.

They were at her house long before he finished his story. "Now do you see why I'm not cheerful?"

"My dearest, it's all over . . . you are with me now. Try to forget it."

He lay in bed in a misty half sleep. A handkerchief dimmed the light of the oil lamp on the table. In his drowsiness he had the feeling of being watched. He opened his eyes: the girl was sitting up in bed staring at him.

"What is it, darling? Why aren't you asleep?" As if she had not heard him, she went on staring.

"Oh, God! I love you so terribly, and I dreamed something so frightful. . . ."

"Go to sleep, Agi. I shouldn't have told you all that stuff."

Suddenly she said softly : " Toni, my sweet . . . you are going away." He turned scarlet in the dim light. He had not said a word of his plans to her. He searched for an answer, but could only stare with stupid, vacant eyes, wondering at her. How had she known? Then, with a man's brutality, he took the simplest way out; his hand touched her cool body, he drew her close, and drove away her fears with the ecstasy of an embrace.

But his sleep was gone. How could she know, how could she have guessed? Anyway, I am going—now that she knows. Shall I tell her or shall I disappear without a word, and one day when things are settled in Vienna write to her and explain? But maybe the shock would be too much for her and she might do something desperate. She loves me, and I . . . She whimpered in her sleep but did not awaken. He buried his tortured head in the pillow. . . . I love her too. I've never loved anyone like this, not even my mother or Uncle Rudi—no one. I've never felt that anybody was so close to me, so much a part of me.

He was in love with her, with her rich quiet voice that had comforted him at night in the hospital, with her young joyousness, with her mothering tenderness, with her strong passionate body. His love had not flamed up suddenly in an embrace. It was rather the satisfaction of an old craving that had developed long ago, perhaps at Innsbruck when he got out of that first bed and awkwardly, ashamed, laid his money on the table. But this girl was different. His conscience tortured him. He was still awake when at dawn Agota stirred and crept into his arms. They lay for a long time, close together. Then :

" Toni, promise you will tell me when you are leaving. I know you won't stay here. Why should you? I'm not

sorry . . . I don't know why, but I know you will get what you want—you'll be somebody . . . But give me your word you will tell me when you're going. And . . . don't go yet. I have three days' leave—Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Marta promised to sleep at the hospital, and for those three days we can live here as if we were married . . . I've never loved anyone as much as I love you, Toni. . . . Toni, you won't go away without staying those three days with me? Then you can leave, and maybe I'll never see you again. But I nursed you and . . . you do love me, don't you? "

Saturday afternoon he bought a thin gold chain, with a small, golden four-leafed clover . . . I am giving her clover to bring her luck, to remind her of me, to . . . because she loved me. Oh, God! how can I leave her. . . .

In the evening he said good-bye to his uncle and aunt; for he did not want them to get up early in the morning. Aunt Anna wept and kissed him again and again. She asked for the hundredth time whether he had packed everything, whether the lock on the suitcase was all right, whether he had put his money into the small bag she had made for him to wear round his neck under his shirt. Uncle Rudi handed him a box of a hundred cigarettes: "From old Huber, with his good wishes. He likes you too, my boy."

He got up at five the next morning—not very happily. But he had to pretend he was leaving. . . . I can't tell them I'm going to spend three days with a girl . . . The old people were up, and the maid too. Hot coffee, warm rolls, tears, long kisses, and Uncle Rudi's "Keep your head up, son, keep your head up. . . ."

Six o'clock. He caught the first streetcar. It was empty, the streets were empty and cold. Half an hour

later he reached the station, went straight to the baggage room and checked his suitcase. "Can it stay here for three days?" "For three weeks, for all I care," answered the attendant. So he went off towards Agota's house, a big white paper bag in his hand—Aunt Anna's lunch for the journey. A quarter of seven—too early yet. He sat down in a café and ordered tea. It stood on the table untouched. . . . God! I was crazy not to get on the train when I was there. If I stay three days with her, maybe I'll never leave. No, I am leaving for certain, but not to-day. I promised to spend three days with her. . . .

He walked round and round her house till eight o'clock, then went in. On the first floor he passed a black-haired girl, the image of Agota, only perhaps a shade taller. She turned her head and smiled, but did not stop. Perfect white teeth. He rang the bell on the third floor.

"Aren't you elegant! . . . New overcoat?"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"Of course. And what's in the bag?"

"Something . . . to eat. I bought it in a shop."

The girl looked at him, took the bag and carried it to the kitchen. "I forgot to ask you—did you see Marta as you came upstairs? She left just this minute."

"Oh, yes. She's very pretty!"

"Do you like her? But you like me better, don't you?" Coquetry and a shade of jealousy were in her voice. She kissed him.

Wednesday morning came. He awoke at five o'clock, slipped noiselessly out of bed and began to dress in the dark. I'll wash my face at the station. He hung his money bag round his neck and pinned it to his shirt. When he was ready, the girl said in a strange, cold voice:

"Are you leaving this morning?" He sat down on

the edge of the bed and reached for her hand. "Tell me, are you leaving?" her voice was soft again. "Toni, my sweet, tell me the truth. I found the passport in your pocket, and the gold chain you got for me."

Perhaps it would be easier to tell the truth. "Yes, Agi, I'm going," he said quietly.

Without a word she jumped out of bed, slipped on her dressing gown and ran to the kitchen for a pitcher of hot water.

"Take off your things and wash, Toni. There's plenty of time. Your bag is at the station, isn't it? Good." She watched him while he washed and gave him a towel. "Come here, there's soap in your ear."

Something told him that the next half hour with her might bring dangerous words—words that would either destroy the future, or spoil the past. He decided to say nothing. She sat on the bed looking at him.

"Toni . . . the time I almost had a child . . . the man had to go back to war. He had been two years on the Russian front, and when he had to go out there again he . . . shot himself in the hand. He only meant to hurt the palm, but somehow the bullet broke his wrist. You see I was already . . . his whole arm had to be cut off. One day when it was almost healed and he could get out of bed, he went into the corridor and jumped out of the second floor window." Her face was white. After a moment she went on: "Toni, I thought at first I couldn't ever get over it. But after a while I did. Then I went to a doctor, because I didn't want the baby to have a dead father. . . ." She came and stood beside him. "I love you much more, but I'll get over this too. . . . Toni dear, give me your chain now . . . no, not like that. Put it round my neck—so. Now go. Have your breakfast

in the station. I haven't any coffee. Have you got everything? And write me from Vienna some day. . . ."

He bent over her, seeking her lips. "Agota, never . . . never . . . never. . . ."

"Don't say that!" she spoke harshly. "You mustn't say never. How do you know what will happen tomorrow?"

In the hall she wrapped a blue woollen muffler round his neck and tucked it under his collar: "You mustn't catch cold in the train." She pushed him gently towards the door. "Toni, for God's sake go! I don't want to cry. . . ."

He stood in the corridor of an overcrowded third-class carriage, one foot on his suitcase. As the train rattled out of the yard, he had a curious feeling that he was in an unknown city. Could this be Budapest? He had never seen the huge tanks of the gasworks with the clock towering over them, the brown walls of long, uniform sheds. The steel bridge, the hill sank slowly behind him. It was not hard to leave this foreign city . . . not hard? And the last three days? They had scarcely left her room. She had woven about him a strange veil out of the threads of her desire and her longing for motherhood. He stroked the blue muffler round his neck, he remembered the touch of her face. "Toni, for God's sake go! I don't want to cry. . . ." Well, it was over now.

He tipped the conductor to get a seat in a compartment with seven other passengers. A good beginning, he thought, and looked out at the misty, autumn Danube. I won't see Budapest again—not for a long time. I am going to live in Vienna, in a strange city. I don't know a soul in Vienna. He repeated it to the rhythm of the clattering wheels. I don't know a soul in Vienna . . .

In the misty rushing landscape, in the seven unfamiliar faces, he saw that the journey was right, and that it was very good not to know a soul in Vienna.

The anxious old people, the two hazy shadows in Torda, the hot young embraces, nightmares, old fears, inexplicable words—all these flew backward over the milestones. With the first official German word an extraordinary self-confidence came to him and lit up his eyes. He was escaping—to Vienna, to life. A grey, heavy curtain had fallen behind him. He touched the money under his shirt, the passport, and the large wallet with the rest of his papers. . . . So—we'll see what will happen.

6

Cold, foggy autumn days. Before he knew it he had been two weeks in Vienna. He had no plans, because it was impossible for him to make definite plans. He waited for the wonders of the city to unfold, as if he were entering a museum without a catalogue. Everything was new; he was enchanted by newness and drew no comparisons.

Kaleidoscopic pictures of a new world whirled before him: broad streets, spacious aristocratic squares, great houses—the background for huge processions marching behind their red flags, cars from the foreign missions with their sirens and their flying pennants, gay illuminated signs over a hundred places of amusement. Among the well-dressed crowd on the Ring, among French, British, Italian officers, among the ragged endless queues in the outlying districts, he could not see the real Viennese citizen who, with tragic stupidity, was living on the

memory of elegant four-wheelers and safe incomes. The Viennese stood perplexed before the burning ruin of middle class prosperity, with the fiction of money in their pockets, with the tepid melody of the Blue Danube Waltz in their hearts, dreaming of the days before 1914.

The mad superficiality, the senseless hurly-burly filled his eyes and ears in the first days, and since he was at a loss to explain it all, he took for granted that what he found in Vienna was good.

Everything went well for him. He had money, and the Hungarian korona was worth three times its value on the exchange. His matriculation at the Technological Academy was a quicker and simpler process than buying a railroad ticket. He got to know a few people—the book dealer, a lawyer who stayed at his hotel, the janitor, one or two students at the Academy. Through one of the students he heard of a good furnished room, and moved from the filthy hotel in the Tabor Strasse where he had gone on the recommendation of some tout at the station. The room was neat and clean, on the second floor of an apartment house, scarcely two minutes' walk from the Academy. The landlady was Frau Wessely, who wore the title of "Widow of Councillor of the Ministry." She had an apartment with six rooms, of which she sublet five, four to students, the fifth to a rather mysterious young woman, tall and blonde. Nobody knew who she was or what she did, except that whenever she left the house, she always locked her door. Kadar saw very little of her. She generally spent an hour or two there in the afternoon, left early in the morning, and returned late at night.

Frau Wessely served breakfast; lunch cost a few hellers at the Academy; for supper he had a can of corned beef

in his room. At that rate his money would keep him in Vienna for eighteen months.

Friendships soon sprang up. In the next room lived a third-year technical student, whose visiting card read : *Carl Victor Hummel, previous to the twelfth of November, 1918, von Hummelberg*. He was an amusing fellow and loved to tell tall stories. One night he came in and began to talk of his property in the Tyrol, of the castle where his ancestors used to carouse with Rudolf von Hapsburg, of past glories of which nothing remained but the title "von," on account of wine, cards, women, and Jewish usurers. It was nearly morning when von Hummelberg yawned and stood up :

"About time to go to bed." He turned back at the door. "What would you say if I told you that there is not a word of truth in the whole story—that my Hummeliade is nothing but hot air?"

"It doesn't matter. You kept me amused."

Hummel's laughter rang out in the silence of the passage, and he slammed the door behind him.

Later, at the Academy, Kadar found that Hummel was the son of an honest baker at St. Pölten, who could count back five generations of bakers and innkeepers on the graves in the churchyard.

Mautner was a young student of philology, tall, thin, and reticent, who lived at the end of the hall. He was always to be found with his chin on his left fist, his right hand scribbling in a fat copy-book. He would stand up, greet visitors, sit down again at once, and continue to write. The room might be on fire around him, and he would not be conscious of it.

Waldner was the third lodger—an inveterate gambler, an art student in his spare time. He never stirred with-

out a pack of cards in his pocket, and was always ready to play for pennies, for a glass of water, for a box on the ear—anything, with anybody. If he could not find a partner, he would play baccarat against himself for hours on end. "My left hand broke my right hand's bank," he would say. Or, tireless, he would play some complicated game of solitaire.

The last room, the largest, was shared by four young Jews. Three of them were medical students; the fourth, a theologian. Adolf Feuerstein, the future rabbi, was the only remarkable one of the lot—lanky, stooped, with black eyes and flapping ears. Beneath the shadow of his powerful hooked nose, his lips were thick and heavy. Every morning he put on the phylactery and said his prayers. But sometimes, when the whole company was assembled at night in the large room, the arguments he started in his clear ringing voice were not those of a rabbi. Adolf Feuerstein leaned against the window sill and accompanied his words with un-Jewish gestures of his clenched fist.

"Religion is the hygiene of the soul just as cleanliness is the hygiene of the body. But imagine ourselves trying to cleanse our bodies at a well without soap, without hot water, a tooth-brush and fresh linen. It is the same with religion if we discard the knowledge of science, philosophy and art. . . . The miracles of religion do not end where the discoveries of modern science begin. . . ."

Adolf Feuerstein stood hours on end by the window, describing vertical lines in the air with his fist. He spoke of Beethoven and Pascal, socialism and St. Francis of Assisi, Roman Law, Shakespeare, the American railroad system, Manet, the War, Lord Rothschild's collection of butterflies, bolshevism, the War of the Roses. He quoted

from Goethe, the Bible, Ruskin, Peter Altenberg. And once he spoke of himself, of his family, and of a brother who had lived in St. Petersburg and was drowned in the Neva during a pogrom in 1906. Crisp, clear phrases came from his lips.

General debates followed his speeches, until the wonder-rabbi—Hummel's nickname for Feuerstein—put an end to the argument by sending them all to bed.

New words, new names, new ideas he had never heard before took Kadar unawares. Unable to arrange and store them away in his brain, he went through a period of confusion, just as once in his childhood when his father first initiated him into the mysteries of the chess board. For a long time he had imagined then that some people walked according to the rule of the knight's move; and he often felt an urge to stop directly opposite other boys so that they would not be able to knock him down, poor little unguarded pawn.

After the debates he lay awake for hours, dizzy with new ideas. It was weeks before he could comprehend and classify the things he heard. Feuerstein took a fancy to him and talked willingly when he came to ask for information about things he did not understand. He was not ashamed of his questions. One morning Feuerstein took him to the National Art Gallery and explained the paintings by the old masters. This is worth at least as much as a lesson in Latin grammar or in the handling of a machine gun, he thought, and for days he was drunk on pictures.

One night something unusual happened: Feuerstein stood at the window discussing the effects of mass psychology in the War, when the door opened and the blonde woman came in.

"May I listen?" she asked, and sat down on the corner of a bed.

The men stood up embarrassed. The young woman—all they knew about her was that she was pretty, and that her name was Gerda Buhr—motioned them not to be disturbed.

"If you want to stay you are welcome," said Feuerstein, and went on with his discussion. The others stole furtive looks at her. Her long, slender legs crossed, she sat on the bed smoking a cigarette and listening with raised eyebrows. One or two of the boys asked questions or whispered to hide their confusion. The wonder-rabbi's gestures became more and more animated, he spoke louder and louder, his voice rang imperative and heavy, but his eyes were focussed on the girl, and she stared back at him. The whole group was interested in nothing but that duel of eyes. Finally Gerda Buhr stood up.

"Thank you," she said, with an ironic smile, "it was very amusing. It's a pity you're such a lukewarm speaker. Still . . . you are hardly more than a child." The next moment she was gone.

Hummel saved the situation by saying: "Never mind, wonder-rabbi. I know her sort. She's a communist or a harlot. Costs twenty kronen at the most." So Gerda Buhr was settled. No one dared to contradict Hummel, and all of them liked Feuerstein enough to leave the affair as it was. The discussions continued; but Gerda Buhr did not appear again.

Days passed quickly at the Academy. Kadar studied hard, and his life flowed without excitement between the classes, books, and Feuerstein's room. Gradually he began to see that he was a foreigner; he had very few friends. At the Academy more than anywhere else he

felt that he was a complete stranger. It was no good trying to tell himself that all he wanted was to study. Among the students at meetings, during discussions, he saw that he belonged nowhere, that no link connected him with anybody. But, sometimes, he thought it was much better for him not to belong to a group—to be free, to have no prejudices. By remaining an outsider he avoided responsibilities.

The first letter to his aunt and uncle was easy to write: I had a pleasant trip. I stayed first at a hotel. I met a few people. I had no difficulty with matriculation. I feel fine. On the advice of my friend Feuerstein I changed all my money into Swiss francs, because its currency isn't likely to depreciate. It was a good idea, for I get more and more Austrian kronen every time I change my francs. . . . Then it got harder and harder to write. Shall I tell them I am fascinated by a woman named Gerda Buhr, who is a communist or a harlot? I feel fine, I am working hard—that was the substance of his monthly letters.

He spoiled several sheets of notepaper writing to Agota. . . . Agota, I thank you, he began, then thought of her lips and tore up the paper. Agi, dear, I am always thinking of you—stupid, banal. I can't say that to her after all those nights she sat by my bed and. . . . Painfully he finished two pages, but when he read them over the cold indifference of the words made him furious. He did not mail the letter. Better not to write at all. I'll write to her some day when I can tell her I am a success. . . . On New Year's eve, when Hummel produced from his Christmas box two bottles of home-made brandy and the whole company got drunk, Kadar with a giddy head picked up a slip of paper and wrote: "A Happy

New Year to you. I love you and I shall never forget you.—Antal.” He posted it the same night. The next day he forgot all about it, and when he did remember it was too late to worry.

Spring came. His Sundays were spent in long walks through the city or excursions in the forest. Sundays were gay. Within ten minutes he was sure to meet some noisy, laughing girl who did not give it a second thought when, after a cup of coffee or beer and sausages, he asked her to come home with him. Frau Wessely locked herself in her room at seven o’clock every evening, and was invisible till morning. The big, freckled servant girl spent most of her nights with the taciturn Mautner, so there was no one to discover or object to his visitors.

Sunday sweethearts—shop girls, housekeepers’ daughters, typists—they were part of his scheme of freedom, no responsibilities, no ties. Then in June he met a girl called Kathy, who was governess to a bank manager’s children. It happened one Saturday night when he stopped outside a theatre to look at the bill. A handsome dark-haired girl stood by a pillar, apparently watching him, and when he turned to look at her, she suddenly came up and spoke to him. “Excuse me, but could you use two tickets for the stalls?”

“I couldn’t,” he replied, and instantly regretted his abruptness.

“I’m sorry,” said the girl, “because I have two tickets, but my fiancé phoned at the last minute that he couldn’t come, and I hate to go alone. . . .”

“Then I’ll buy one after all, if . . .” he hesitated for an instant . . . “if you will keep the other.”

She smiled. “Half a solution,” she said, “but better than none.”

He told her his name, they shook hands and entered the theatre. A sentimental Viennese musical comedy with the inevitable waltz song. The whole audience joined in the chorus. "Marvellous, marvellous," she whispered, and sang with the others. "Prince of my heart . . . in old Vienna." It was over by ten o'clock.

"I've almost an hour yet," said Kathy. "Let's walk home. Are you going my way? . . . *Prince of my heart* . . . as a matter of fact, I don't quite know why I went to the theatre with you, and now I let you walk home with me and I don't know who you are. Really, I never do such things."

He told her he was from Budapest, a student at the Academy and that he lived at Frau Wessely's.

"*Prince of my heart* . . . and do you like Vienna?"

"How could I help liking a place where I found you?"

She laughed at the cheap compliment, and told him that she came from Linz, that she was twenty-one, had a diploma as a governess and a fiancé named Alois Tangl who owned a good plumbing shop. Only . . . things were not going so well with Alois Tangl. He did not seem to be as eager to see her as he used to be. The other day he kept her waiting in the street nearly a half-an-hour and did not apologize. She talked of her job, the place she lived. The bank manager spent most of his time traveling between Vienna, Zurich and Berlin, and his wife was scarcely ever at home when he was away. The twelve-year-old Olga was a queer, taciturn, pale child. Egon, Olga's eight-year-old brother, had a genius for building blocks.

They strolled along slowly. When they passed through a dark, quiet by-street, Kathy said, "You can take my arm."

He slipped his arm through hers, bent over and kissed the thin white blouse over her shoulder and then her bare neck.

"I didn't say you could do that," she laughed. "Aren't you afraid of my fiancé?"

"Is he really your fiancé?"

She drew away from him. "Now I really am cross."

They walked on in silence. At the gate of a large, substantial house she stopped. "If you hadn't made me cross, I would say . . ."

He took her hand and kissed it. "But you silly little thing, I didn't mean it that way. Honestly."

"I knew it," said Kathy complacently. "Well then . . . next Wednesday is my afternoon off. Come for me here and if the weather is good we can go to Schönbrunn. Don't come to the house. I'll meet you round the corner."

On Wednesday it began to drizzle early in the morning and kept on steadily all day, but at four o'clock he stood on the street corner. Kathy ran up to him.

"I can't stay a minute. I had to sneak out. There's a lot to tell you. First of all, Tangl has got himself engaged to a cousin of his—last Sunday. He came yesterday to tell me. I didn't make any fuss—I just said, 'I wish you both much happiness.' He asked if we couldn't be friends all the same, and I said, 'Good-bye, there's the door.' And then the Lerner's are leaving town Saturday—the whole family. The children are going with their grandmother to Aussee and their mother and father to Berlin. Only the cook and I will stay here. They said I could go home for four weeks, but I suggested it would be better if a reliable person were in the house, so they sent the parlour-maid on leave. Come back Sunday afternoon at three and we'll see what can be done. . . ."

He looked in the telephone directory. . . . Lerner, O. Richard. He has two phone numbers, so he must be an important person. Shall I call her? No, I'd better not. . . . This Tangl business—it doesn't sound quite straight, but after all, why not? It didn't matter anyway. What mattered was that Kathy was pretty—maybe beautiful. Yes, decidedly beautiful, and sweet.

Kathy was waiting behind the gate when he reached the house. A little embarrassed he followed her through the marble hall and up the magnificent staircase, his feet sinking into the soft crimson carpet. Kathy's room—they reached it through a glass-covered passage—was a pretty, cheerful place, with windows opening on the rear garden. The shades were pulled down and the table was laid for tea with exquisite dishes and linen. What would the rest of the house be like if the governess' room was so elegant, he wondered. At first he was uncomfortable, but Kathy chattered and laughed until she made him feel at ease.

She told him about Linz where her father was municipal head-gardener, about her brother in Chicago, about Tangl, whom she wouldn't mind marrying after all . . . but it was better to be rid of him. He wasn't very interesting anyway. Then she asked him about himself—what sort of people he knew, what were his plans for the future. Little by little their talk grew less impersonal. Suddenly Kathy was in his arms, his hot trembling hands caressed her.

When he left at midnight, Kathy said: "You may come any time you like, but phone me first, because I don't want you to run into the cook."

This would not be like his other affairs—not because it was so pleasant to be with her in her own room, but

because she was so different from the others. He thought of Agota again and tried to believe the two were alike. But when he had seen Kathy three or four times he knew that they were not. After Agota's free, compelling sensuality, he found a deep satisfaction in Kathy's shy, submissive, almost childlike devotion. Slowly she learned to know all about him and did small helpful things for him. The lunchroom at the Academy was closed for the summer, and she found a small restaurant where he had good food for very little money. She discovered that his underwear was washed badly by an expensive laundry, and sent his things to a good one.

There was complete harmony between them. When we are together, it is as if she were my wife, he thought, and as if she were my little sister when we are apart. The summer was kind to them. Sometimes as they walked along the lonely parts of the Danube bank far away from town, he watched her in a thin white dress, her hair hanging loose about her shoulders, and his heart was filled with a warm, free feeling he could not name. One day he persuaded her to go to his room. "It isn't nice of you not to be interested in how I live." Kathy looked about the room, and in five minutes she had rearranged things and straightened out his wardrobe. After that she came unasked at any hour. "I just wanted to see what you do when you aren't with me." The time he spent without her was lonely and monotonous: books, drawings, books, drawings. He was preparing for his examination and had to work very hard.

Once or twice they spent an unforgettable sunny day in the forest. "I've never in my life had such a beautiful summer. And I probably never shall again," she said; and he felt, too, that life was good, that everything was

just as it should be. He never told her that he loved her, although he knew more surely every day that beneath his passion for her was a desire stronger than physical attraction. And she accepted his silence.

Once he spoke of the future. "I shall have to work a tremendous lot, but I don't mind, because I'll succeed in the end. When I finish at the Academy I'll try to get a position with a building contractor, and when I've had enough practical experience . . ."

"What will you do then?"

"Shall I marry you then?"

"Good heavens, I'll probably be dead long before that!" she laughed.

Towards the end of August she came running to his room with a telegram saying that the Lerner's would be back the next day.

"You'll have to wait now until I write to you that you can come, or I'll come and see you. You can imagine how busy I'll be for a while."

Ten days passed before he had a note from her: I am dreadfully busy. The children did not have a good vacation. The boy is coughing. I don't know when I'll be able to see you. I'll write again soon. . . .

Summer was coming to an end—unbearable, breathlessly hot days, empty and stupid without her . . . maybe Tangl? . . . He went out and spent half an hour walking around her house, but he could see nothing. He returned to his room disappointed and annoyed; and when in the hall he met Gerda Buhr, whom he had not seen for weeks, an inexplicable anger swept over him. He passed without speaking and slammed his door.

The day of his examination came closer and closer, but he could not study. His drawings would not come out

right. He sat in his room for hours on end, poring over books or drawings, and scribbling senseless words on the margins. He was bored, and the discovery alarmed him. How could he be bored? It was a luxury.

One day at last a postcard came from Kathy. "I'll come to see you to-morrow night. Please wait for me."

Kathy came, but she was full of complaints. "God only knows what is wrong with the brats. The boy is still coughing and has a fever, and the girl is completely crazy. She doesn't speak to anybody and scarcely eats. . . ."

She left at ten o'clock, and in his loneliness he had a dull, cold feeling that something was wrong—or something was beginning to go wrong. Their excited, hurried embrace had tired and depressed him; he tossed about sleepless in bed. After midnight he heard someone walking in the passage—light, quiet steps: Gerda Buhr. Who could she be, this strange woman? What could she do that kept her out till late at night? Was she really a communist, or was she a harlot? But why should I worry about what she does for a living? What am I doing for a living—or rather what am I going to do? His roll of bills had become alarmingly thin during the summer—he could tell that by looking at it. He did not know exactly how much money was left, but he suspected he had spent more than he should on excursions, restaurants, movies. Then—quite unnecessarily—he had bought a new grey suit and a pair of brown shoes. What on earth for? Do I want to be a dandy? Or do I want to study, pass exams, get a job, earn money? Have I lost my senses—calling on a girl for weeks in a stranger's house, like a trooper, or a postman, or a gigolo. . . . He tried to think of strong curses to quiet his anger. He ground his

teeth and stared into the darkness. To hell with all of you! And he pulled the blanket over his head.

The next morning he awoke with a persistent dull headache. He buried himself in his books with bitter determination, and this studying rage lasted for days. He passed his examination, and the new term began at once.

Kathy came once a week, but their half-hours together were strained and hurried, as if they were an attempt at escape. She always left restlessness behind her, and uncertainty. Once—it was past ten o'clock—when she was leaving, he discovered that her stocking was torn.

“Kathy, there is a hole in your stocking.”

“Yes, I know. I saw it when I put them on.”

“Then why didn't you take them off.”

“But I was in such a hurry, dear . . .” and she left.

He wanted to rush after her, changed his mind and paced up and down the room. Don't you dare come to me again in torn stockings, a brutal voice cried in him.

The new term was under way: books, the dinner table at the Academy, corned beef—nothing was particularly changed. He was still free and independent. He knew no one except Kathy and his fellow-lodgers. He lived within a grey and sticky mass of weeks, in days of bitter concentration on his work. Feuerstein went to stay in a seminary. Waldner transferred his gambling to the University of Graz. Evenings passed at home in solitude, unless he talked with Hummel.

With the punctuality of a clock, Kathy came once a week. One wretchedly cold, rainy night, while she was hurriedly dressing, he watched her as she stood before the mirror in the dim light of the tired electric bulb. She seemed strange—shorter, her breasts looked bigger. Was she getting fat? Her corset had slipped to one side, and

she was struggling to pull it straight, her lips pressed tight together, a funny childish expression on her face. He could not suppress an unkind giggle.

"What's the matter?" she asked, looking at him in the mirror, a safety pin between her lips.

"Nothing," he said. "You were making such a funny face."

"So," she said, coldly, "you don't like my face?"

"Don't be angry, Kathy darling," he protested. "You know I didn't mean anything. There's nothing wrong."

"Are you so sure there's nothing wrong?" Her tone was aggressive now. "And how would you like it if I never came again?"

"Don't be silly. Of course you will come again."

She did. But from that time on they said almost nothing to each other. They had something to eat and sat in silence. A few, uncertain words, then silence again. At last, when he caressed her, she undressed quickly, quietly. . . .

One Sunday night—a terrific wind played havoc with snow and sleet—Kathy complained of a headache and dizziness. She had almost not come. He took her face in his hands and looked gently into her dark-circled eyes. Touched by his tenderness—he had not made such a gesture for a long time—she threw her arms around his neck and began to cry.

"Toni, dearest, we do love each other, don't we?" Her tone frightened him. If she expected romantic promises, he would leave her, leave the house. But she said nothing more, only clung to him with a sudden rush of passion. He felt her hot, quick breath on his face. She is feverish, he thought, really ill.

Thursday morning he woke up with a headache, and

his throat hurt. He asked Frau Wessely to lend him a thermometer: it showed a high temperature. The grippe, he thought, and went back to bed with no strength left even to take an aspirin. The pain in his throat grew worse; he was thirsty, but had no energy to reach out for a glass of water.

He was still asleep, or rather lying in a feverish stupor when Frau Wessely knocked at his door the next morning. "Good heavens!" she cried. "You're all broken out!"

A doctor came and examined him. "Scarlet fever. You must send him to a hospital at once, unless you want to take care of him here." Half an hour later an ambulance came. Frau Wessely was running about hysterically without the least idea what to do; no one dared to go into his room. Then Gerda Buhr appeared in the hall.

"I've been listening to this racket for the last half-hour. Are you all out of your minds?"

"But please," explained the freckled servant-girl, "Herr Kadar has a contagious disease . . . nobody wants to catch it."

"Well, if you're afraid, clear out and don't get in the way. You're no help sniffing here." Gerda strode into Kadar's room. The ambulance men were putting him on a stretcher. He stared at her, his mouth open, but he could not make a sound.

"Cheer up," she said. "Don't get scared. You'll be all right." She picked up his clothes and scattered belongings, and stuffed them into the wardrobe, opened the drawer and found his money in a flat cigarette tin. "Hello! francs." She counted the money and turned to Kadar. "I've found six hundred and twenty francs. I'll keep them for you, in case. . . . All right, you can take him now," she said to the ambulance men.

General Hospital, Department for Contagious Diseases. Kadar lay in a small, bare room on the first floor, with a window opening on a wintry-looking, empty courtyard. In the opposite corner a young boy was sitting up in bed watching him. As soon as he noticed that Kadar was beginning to look around, he said, softly :

“Are you feeling better now? We thought for a while that . . .” he stopped short. There was silence for a few minutes. “I’m quite well now,” the boy began again, “but you’ve been in a bad way for three days. Your sister will tell you all about it.”

“My sister?” They were the first words he had spoken for three days. His voice seemed strange and muffled.

“Yes, the blonde lady who came twice every day. Or isn’t she your sister?”

Kadar closed his eyes, too weak to talk. My sister? Maybe he meant my cousin. Maybe Mariska is back in Vienna. Could she have dyed her hair yellow? The boy was talking again.

“I’ve had scarlet fever too, but I’m almost well now. In two weeks I can go home.” He made a funny little grimace. They lay in silence until a nurse came in, an enormous, red-faced woman.

“Well, young man, I’m glad you’re awake. Aren’t we hungry? Would we like a glass of milk?”

Kadar swallowed the warm milk in little gulps. Suddenly he remembered something. “My money!” he exclaimed to the nurse, who was holding the glass to his lips.

"Your money? Would you believe it—have you got any? You can ask your sister about it when she comes."

My sister? Mariska? Kathy? Aunt Anna? . . . He fell asleep. When he awoke, there on a chair at the foot of his bed sat Gerda Buhr. Of course, she is my blonde sister.

"So you are getting better," she said cheerfully. "That's right. I hear," she nodded in the direction of the other bed, "that you have been asking about your money. I've got it—six hundred and twenty francs. Or rather, six hundred. I had to change twenty into kronen. Don't worry about that now. If you want anything, just tell me."

Kadar looked at her—fair, short hair; steel blue, sparkling eyes; high, white forehead; clear, pink cheeks. I've never seen her face so close before. But . . . why is she here?

"Thank you." He moved his lips with difficulty. "Aren't you. . . ."

"What?"

"Afraid you might catch it? Did you know I have scarlet fever?"

"I've already had scarlet fever, but anyway I'm not afraid of anything."

"But you might carry it away with you."

"Look here, I know how to take care of myself and the people I'm around. Don't worry about that." Her voice was firm, perhaps unnecessarily brusque. Kadar said no more, but lay with half-closed eyes looking at her profile.

"How long have I been here?" he asked finally.

"Four days."

"And . . . did anybody ask for me, or. . . ."

"No," said Gerda, "she didn't call."

She didn't call. How simply she said it. Behind closed eyelids he saw Kathy standing in front of the mirror twisting her corset.

"Would you be kind enough to phone her for me?"

"Of course." She took a small notebook out of her pocket. "What is her name?"

"Kathy Ulrich. She is with Lerner the banker."

"Nurse girl?" she asked sharply.

"Governess," he answered, with as much emphasis as he could.

"All right, governess. Anyway, that explains things. I shouldn't be surprised if your little friend has scarlet fever too."

Instantly he remembered. Kathy had complained of a headache and dizziness last Sunday, and her breath had been so hot. A sudden, terrible impatience overwhelmed him. "Please—I must know for certain. . . ."

"Don't get excited. You'll know to-morrow."

After she had gone, the boy in the other bed asked: "You're Hungarian, aren't you?"

"Yes, why?"

"But your sister speaks like a Viennese."

What do they mean my sister? . . . "She's not my sister."

"Really? Who is she then?"

"She is . . . a lady who lives in the same house where I do. Just a good friend." It would be ridiculous to say I don't know who she is or why she comes. . . .

"You see, I was right," said Gerda Buhr, as soon as she came in the next afternoon. "The Lerner's house is a hospital. I spoke to Frau Lerner, and both children and your Kathy are in bed with scarlet fever. I must say she's not very careful. The youngsters were ill and

she was full of germs when she saw you last. But it's no use crying over spilt milk. I sent her a message," Gerda laughed, "that her cousin Antal was anxious to know how she was."

Kadar smiled too, then was troubled. Kathy—ill. "Has she got it very badly?"

"No, I don't think so. But next time I'll know more about it."

"Will you phone again?"

"Of course I will."

Strange woman, this Gerda Buhr. Her movements were so abrupt and energetic, her words so firm. If you didn't look at her carefully, you might think she was a young girl. How old could she be? Not more than twenty-four or five at the most. Clear, bright eyes, boyish figure—there was something very crisp and fresh about her. She never stopped long: she brought him what he needed, said always something wise or amusing, and then vanished. And yet—it was as if she were still there. .

During the first eight or ten days Kadar scarcely spoke to her at all. His temperature was so high that the doctor was afraid there might be complications. He simply lay there, his brain a blank, and when he was awake he gazed at the ceiling for hours on end, trying not to think. Now and then the boy spoke to him from the other bed. He was a queer lad. The minute Kadar opened his eyes, he sat up and began to chatter. "Do you want anything? Shall I ring for the nurse? Would you like to read something—I've got a funny paper that's awfully amusing. Tell me . . . were you a soldier? Why did you leave Budapest?" and a thousand more such questions.

Kadar did not always answer, but after a while he got used to the boy's eager voice, his unexpected questions. An extraordinary lad—his name was Paul Hartung, he was seventeen years old, with fair hair and soft grey eyes. When Kadar looked closely at him, he was struck by the smoothness of his skin—his hands were like a woman's.

"You're lucky; you've got someone to come every day to see whether you are still alive . . . but no one is particularly interested in me," he said thoughtfully. "I'm not on very good terms with my parents, you see." If there had not been a bitter note in his voice, his earnestness would have seemed almost funny.

"Why not?"

"Well, you know, it's a very old story." Really amusing to hear the pale, girlish seventeen-year-old declare with a wave of his delicate hand: It's a very old story.

"Look here," the boy went on, "you may think I'm just spoiled, but that's not it. The trouble began with some irregularity about my birth . . . my mother had a friend at that time—it was an old childhood love affair. . . ."

"Shame on you." Kadar tried to stop him. "You shouldn't talk like that about your mother."

"You'd better listen to me and don't interrupt," said the boy calmly. "I have positive proof—letters that I found in an old desk when my mother went away to a sanitarium for two months last year. Of course, the mere fact that she didn't destroy them shows the neurotic type she belongs to. I told the whole story to a friend of mine—you've seen him here, the young man with black hair . . . he's going to be a nerve specialist and alienist . . .

he's a fourth-year medical student now—and he analysed the case for me. But maybe you're not interested."

Kadar nodded that he was, and the other continued :

"Mother insisted on keeping up her old friendship even after she was married, and father didn't like the idea at all, which is not very surprising. He had no real proof of her infidelity, but in one of the letters he wrote to her when she was away for the summer he said, 'If you try to convince yourself and me that you are going through a psychological crisis brought on by your pregnancy, and that the only cure for it is to see a certain man, then I shall have to forbid you to see him.' That speaks for itself, doesn't it? My father is a lawyer, by the way. Well, then I was born, and I was a year old when they were divorced. Mother did not marry the other man—or rather he did not marry her. He went to America. But what do you think happened two years later? I give you three guesses. Father and mother were married again. Irrepressible sexual reminiscences, erotic associations stronger than any other complexes in them brought them together again. That was my psychologist friend's explanation. Two other children were born—Daisy, who is eleven, and Frank, two years younger. Now . . . parental love may differ between the first born and the youngest, or between a boy and a girl, but the fact that both my parents turned against me cannot be explained by the laws of equal division as distinct from one-sidedness of parental affection."

"You're an ass. Who put all this rubbish into your head?" Kadar tried to interrupt him, but he was not to be stopped.

"No, listen to me. It's not rubbish, and I know the real explanation. Father hates me because he sees in me

the proof of the unfaithfulness that robbed him of his instinct of exclusiveness and his male conceit. Mother hates me because I remind her of her disappointment and of her false step, which she probably regrets."

"You're crazy," Kadar interrupted again, partly in amazement, partly in disgust.

"Rudeness won't convince me," the boy waved his arm. "There's no doubt that they hate me. Look here—Daisy and Frank have scarlet fever too. They are being cared for at home, but I was shipped off here to a public hospital. Wouldn't it have been all the same to them if the trained nurse looked after all three of us? Isn't it obvious?"

"No," said Kadar. "It doesn't prove anything."

"Oh, all right," the boy continued. "But it has been going on like that ever since I can remember. They are rich, so they give me everything I want just to get rid of me. They take more interest in a stranger than in me. Their conscience is satisfied by stuffing me with money. There is a clerk in my father's office—he gives me the money. I can have as much as I like, within reason of course. But I am sure I could always get more than I ask for."

He had worked himself up into a rage; his face was flushed, and he breathed heavily. Fascinated, Kadar stared at him in silence. Paul picked up the glass from his table and drank a little water.

"Oh, what does it matter?" he said presently. "I'm used to it all by now. . . . We have an enormous apartment—no earthly use for it to be so big—and I can keep out of their way. They seem quite satisfied if they hear occasionally from the servants that Master Paul is still alive. . . . Man was born to be a lonely beast. . . . The

main thing is that we can spend as much time together as we like. . . .”

“We? Who else?” asked Kadar.

“A girl I’m fond of.”

Ludwig Wirth, Paul’s medical-student friend, came again and brought with him some books—Wedekind and Shaw. After some persuasion Kadar glanced at the books. He liked the first better than he expected, was glad to read the second, and within a week he had digested them all. After that they spent hours discussing what they had read. Kadar felt that he had never before been capable of thinking intelligently, that all he had read up to now was empty trash. Now I am beginning to learn, he thought, as he listened to Paul, and he was amazed at the boy’s surprising opinions and the remarkable logic with which he expressed them. He seemed a mature, serious man, and Kadar felt in comparison as if he were an ignorant child. The boy’s extraordinary power of expression gave Kadar the desire to talk, and little by little he told Paul the whole of his life, his experiences, his opinions. He revealed to him more than he ever had to his aunt and uncle during those long dark winter evenings when they sat around the diningroom table. He gave away more of his hidden self than he had to Agota when they were standing in front of her house that sunny afternoon in the fall. Paul is my only real friend, he thought. And one day he suddenly decided: of course, —I’ll tell Paul. I’m depressed because I’m tired of her, and I can’t get rid of the picture of her standing before the glass, struggling with her corset. . . .

Wirth came in the afternoon. “I’ve just talked to Rosette. She wants to come and see you, but I wouldn’t let her. So she sends you kisses,”

After Wirth had gone, Kadar lay for a time in silence, then sat up in bed. Funny that I never asked before. "Tell me, Paul, have you ever had an affair with a woman?"

"Of course. For more than a year."

"Who is she?" Kadar asked stupidly.

"Must you know her name?" the boy said in a mocking voice.

"I didn't mean it that way. I meant—what sort of woman is she?"

"I don't mind. It's not a secret. Her name is Rosette Goldrain. What else would you like to know about her? She is slim and fair, with brown eyes, three months younger than I am. Her father is a councillor in the Ministry of Finance, and he has something official to do with my father. Anything else?"

A society girl, not a nurse or a servant-girl or a governess. And she was seventeen, slim and fair. . . .

"I'll introduce you as soon as we are well again."

The day came when the boy was discharged from the hospital. "Paul," Kadar said, with a dry throat, "I want to thank you for. . . ."

"You've nothing to thank me for. Look after yourself and get well soon. I'll come and see you, of course." And he left.

Gerda continued to come every day, and Kadar understood her less and less each time. He could not make up his mind what sort of tie existed between them. If he wanted something, she brought it the next day, and she never forgot to give him news of Kathy. At first the reports were detailed: temperature, appetite, she sends you best wishes. But during the fourth week Gerda said only: "She is all right." He did not notice the change,

and when one day Gerda failed even to mention Kathy, it did not occur to him to enquire. It was Gerda now who filled his idleness. Why does she take the trouble to come every day? Why did she arrange everything for me from the first? I've seen her every day for four weeks, but I know less about her every time. He analysed his own feelings towards her, tried to find a clue to their friendship, watched her face, her eyes, her words to discover an explanation. But why? It's better to pass the time thinking of her as an enigma.

Snow fell, and one morning the small courtyard was covered with a soft white carpet that reflected a cheerful whiteness into his room. For the first time he was glad to be alone, glad that the second bed in the room had remained empty. He drank a great deal of milk, his appetite began to return.

Man was born to be a lonely beast . . . Father and Mother were buried in Torda. Aunt Anna and Uncle Rudi—letters came and went regularly once a month—brief variations of an unchanging theme: We are still alive. Since the beginning of his illness he had not written for fear of alarming them. He might not see them for years—perhaps never again. . . . Agota—she nearly had a child . . . and she gave him a blue scarf. . . . The little Viennese girls. . . . Kathy . . . standing in front of the mirror with her corset slipped sideways over her hips . . . he had never noticed before how plump she was. . . . What was this terrible empty chill that came over him when he remembered names, faces, voices? Was there anyone who meant more than a voice, anyone who survived his own phrases, who represented more than the memory of a fleeting moment or a few passing words? His parents, whom he could scarcely remember? Mariska

Gazda, whom he had once kissed? Gerda, Paul? No one.

And then in the midst of these restless questions came the consciousness of returning health. I will get well. I will work. I will find friends. I will earn a lot of money and have a wife. . . . He sat up in bed, whistled merrily, and pinched the fat nurse on the arm.

At the end of the fifth week he walked once or twice around the room, consumed his breakfast with an appetite, and went back to bed as a precaution. Paul was with him the whole afternoon.

"I told father that I must have a tutor to help me make up for the time I lost when I was in here. As soon as you are well, you can come to see me every day—provided, of course, that you don't mind coaching me."

They talked cheerfully. Paul had brought chocolates and a packet of fine cigarettes—the first Kadar had smoked since he was taken ill.

"Was the blonde unknown here to-day?" the boy chaffed him.

"Of course. She comes every day for five minutes."

"But now that you are by yourself doesn't she stay longer?"

Kadar's face turned red. "No. What makes you think she would?"

"I hope you don't doubt that she is in love with you?"

"Don't be ridiculous. How should you know what love is?"

The blood rushed to his face again. I never thought of such a thing. It's crazy . . . she hardly noticed me before I was sick, and since then she comes because she is sorry for me. . . .

"You musn't hesitate too long," said Paul, with an

impudent air of confidence. "You're well enough now. Take hold of her and give her what she is waiting for."

"You are a cynic, Paul. You don't know everything. . . ."

"Toni, I have wasted my time trying to educate you."

The next morning the nurse came with a message: "Fräulein Buhr phoned that she has a cold and can't come to-day or to-morrow. She hopes to be here again Friday."

He was so depressed that Paul and Wirth could not cheer him in the afternoon. The next day was even gloomier until he remembered that perhaps she would come in the morning. A warm, persistent emotion filled him . . . can she really be in love with me?

The next morning she came. When she opened the door he jumped to his feet. "You haven't been very ill, I hope?"

"No, I haven't been ill at all. I stayed away on purpose, because I wanted to spare you the first two or three days . . . that is, I wanted to escape the possibility of your asking me something. . . ."

His heart throbbed heavily—it was the first time he had heard her speak so gently, so unsteadily.

"Is there anything wrong?" he asked in a very low voice.

"Yes," she whispered, and looked away from him as she had never done before. "Kathy . . . is dead . . . she died ten days ago of brain fever."

He felt a strangling in his throat, an icy numbness that crept up through his body; his heart pounded, and in his brain he counted the beats, wondering what caused them—shock, pain, sorrow? . . . The furious heart-beats began to die away. He could still hear at the back of his head

a weak, sobbing echo : Man was born to be a lonely beast ; and in that moment he realized with a strange, distant horror that Kathy had passed out of his life as if she had never been beside him.

Gerda stayed with him the whole afternoon. She saw that the news of Kathy's death had struck only on hard indifference, but she knew too that if she left him alone his indifference would torture him doubly. Tactfully, cleverly she kept his mind off his forced woefulness. For the first time she asked him about himself, his studies, his plans. They talked of other things—of unemployment, distribution of wealth, class distinctions.

"Every new world was created out of a cosmic chaos ; the rebirth of a new society must be preceded by social chaos. . . ." But her voice, her words were strange to him, and he knew that he had no ideas and no convictions about these things—they had nothing to do with him. Gerda saw the almost frightened, defensive expression on his face, and she came back to personal matters.

"Austrian money goes down every day, but of course that's to your advantage, for you have Swiss francs." She began to account for his money—not quite five hundred and fifty francs left. Gerda suggested that he might get a job as tutor.

"I have—I'm going to coach Paul Hartung."

"You mean that boy who was here ? I noticed that you seemed to get on with him."

Kadar told her enthusiastically about him, while she listened in silence.

"I'm afraid you're too easily influenced," she said at last. "Take care he doesn't get you into extravagant habits."

He was irritated. Extravagant ? What did she mean ?

Does she want to turn me against him? And what could she offer in exchange? I've known her for more than a year, but to-day is the first time she has said a hundred words to me. In all this time I've not found out who she is. Can it be true what Paul said about her?

The remaining few days at the hospital passed in leaden boredom and itching impatience. He knew now that Kathy had gone out of his life as the scarlet fever had. When he tried to conjure up her pretty little face, her smile that had been so charming that first night outside the theatre, the vision was blurred. He thought of how she had lain beside him, but the memory was confused with strange faces, breasts, bodies, until he saw only a kaleidoscopic, synthetic, terrifying, supernatural woman whose body was made up of a hundred ill-fitting parts. He tried to imagine her dead face, her cold body consumed by fever. Poor little thing, he murmured to himself in the dark, and tried to press a little compassion from his heart. But the effort to feel sad only made him yawn, and he fell asleep.

He thumbed through the text-books that Gerda had brought him, thinking with terror how many weeks of study he had missed. When he tried to set up a schedule for himself, a painful feeling of uncertainty rushed over him—it would be simpler not to plan, to take things as they came along.

Gerda continued to spend her five minutes a day with him—never longer. No matter how hard he tried to make her see that she fascinated him, she persisted in drawing slowly back into her shell.

•

The first evening at Frau Wessely's all the other students met in Kadar's room. They brought cakes and wine; the wonder-rabbi sent from the seminary a sickly-sweet honey-and-walnut pastry; Hummel presented him with a rag doll with red-ink roses on its cheeks and a large bib with the inscription "Memento of the passing of my second childhood." They stuffed him with anecdotes and sweets.

As soon as he had a chance he slipped out into the hall and looked at the door of Gerda's room. It was closed. Nine o'clock, then ten, and Gerda had not come in. He became so restless that he sent the boys away, pretending that he was exhausted and too weak to stay up any longer. But he did not go to bed, and when the lights were out everywhere he opened his door a little. The slow minutes crept on with clumsy feet in the silence and the dark. A clock somewhere at the far end of the passage—it had not been there before, or perhaps he had forgotten it—made a limping tick-tock which gradually seemed to get slower. A rushing sound in the wall, probably water running down a pipe—you miss so many night noises when you are asleep. A door opened and closed softly—so the freckled servant-girl is still sleeping with Mautner. Minutes, hours, years seemed to pass—how do you know whether they are going forward or backward? And he was seized with the feeling that he was sitting in a trench; if he were to raise his hand he could touch Danko or Altmann, and he expected any minute a Verey-light to split the blackness. A second one, a third, and then you knew that you were in for it.

A key turned quietly in a lock—Gerda. Kadar sprang up and out into the passage. She bumped into his outstretched arm in the dark.

“Who is it?” she cried in a low, frightened voice.

“It’s me—Kadar,” he whispered.

“I might have guessed. . . . What do you want? What is the idea, you idiot?”

“Gerda. . . I must talk to you!”

“But not at this time of the night. Come and see me to-morrow afternoon at six.”

And if I didn’t let her go? If I seized her round the throat? . . . She was gone.

The next morning he went to the Academy, called on one of his professors, spoke to a few students, and lunched at the diningroom. On his way home he strolled through the street where Paul Hartung lived, and looked at the house.

Four o’clock. He heard Gerda enter the passage and exchange a word with Frau Wessely. Ten minutes after four—it seemed like five o’clock at least. Then Gerda came into the room.

“I have to leave early this evening, so I didn’t wait for you to come to me,” she said, and sat down. “How are you? Don’t you feel a little weak?”

He did not answer. “First of all,” he said after a while, “I must thank you for all you’ve done for me.”

“Don’t thank me for anything,” she interrupted. “Anybody would have done the same. I was a nurse in the War, and I knew that you needed. . . .”

“You were a nurse in the War?” he exclaimed.

“Yes; after my husband was killed in 1914, I went into a hospital. . . .” She stopped, and, as if she regretted a too familiar tone, went on in a cool, matter-

of-fact voice: "Anyway, I don't deserve any thanks. Here is your money—five hundred and thirty-six francs. And now you must study hard to make up for lost time."

The next moment—he had no idea how it happened—he was crushing her thin wrists in his clenched hands and pouring out frantic, desperate words:

"For God's sake, is that all you can say to me? And now you want to go and leave me here alone. I've been near you for a year and still I don't know anything about you. Why have you been so good to me? Why did you come to see me in the hospital every day? Why don't you ever let me know what you think and feel? Don't you know I'm mad about you?"

"Let me go!" she cried, and wrenched away from him. "You beast! Let me go!"

His frenzied grip had left wide red circles on her wrists; her face was pale as she leaned against the door. Kadar stood there, ashamed, lost. Slowly the color returned to her face.

"You silly child," she said, calmly. "What do you want? Isn't it a shame to end our . . . friendship this way. Do you want to know why I paid any attention to you? You look a little like my husband—that's all." If I were to jump at her throat and strangle her. . . . "Why should you know anything about me? We are strangers—staying in different rooms at the same hotel. . . . And if I told you that I am a typist or a dancer, what difference could that make to you? Look here, if you really feel that you owe me something for the time I spent with you when you were sick, then go on acting as if I were a stranger, and think of me as little as you do of poor Kathy."

His face went scarlet. "Do you think it is so simple?"

"Oh, you baby!" And now her voice was amused. "I'm at least six years older than you . . . go pick up some fresh little girl who is more your sort—mentally too. . . . Come, let's shake hands." Her hand was narrow and white and very cool. He thought for an instant that nothing could keep him from throwing himself down before her—or—or—but the white hand withdrew from his hot, moist grasp, and he found himself alone in the room.

"You were wrong about that woman," he said the next evening when they sat for the first time in Paul's room. "She isn't in love with me, but . . ." and he told what had happened. The boy sat sideways in a deep chair, his legs dangling over the arm.

"Well?"

"Well, what? There's nothing else to it."

"Do you think so? Then you're wrong." Paul was silent for a while. "On the other hand, I think it is much better for it to end this way. Unless . . . I hope you're not really in love with her."

Kadar blushed at the sarcastic edge on the boy's question. "Of course I'm not," he said, and heard the false ring of his own voice. "But it's not surprising that she interested me."

"So, you were interested? Interested in what? You had no business to be."

He was perfectly right, Kadar admitted to himself. "Did I ever tell you that Hummel once said that she was either a harlot or a communist?"

"Maybe you did," replied Paul with exaggerated indifference. "Here, take a look at this. It's part of Wirth's dissertation that he brought me to read." He

handed over a fat parcel of papers. "It's called 'Contribution towards the Psychology of Premature Puberty.' You can guess what it is all about."

Shortly afterwards Wirth came in, and Paul rang for the footman to bring tea, liqueurs, fruit, and pastries. Kadar sat looking round the room: rich, modern furniture, closed-in bookcase, wide divan, piano. Paul, noticing his quiet survey, drew a great circle in the air with his arm.

"A splendid testimony to parental affection," he jeered. "How many times do you think they have come into this room?" He pointed to one of the doors. "This one is locked; there is an empty room behind it that no one ever goes into. Just imagine how I would feel if I had a nervous disposition? Beyond that are the nursery for my dear brother and sister, and the governess' room. Ludwig, have a cigarette. Or do you want your pipe?"

Wirth lit a long-stemmed pipe; conversation began in earnest. They talked of a new book on modern drama, of an article in the newspaper, and finally Wirth picked up his manuscript and began to explain it. "Before we approach the subject of the psychology of premature puberty, we must be perfectly clear about phraseology. . . ."

Kadar saw nothing of Gerda for days—it was as if she had disappeared from the place. His nights were troubled and sleepless. I've got to make up my mind about her . . . decide once and for all whether I can live without her . . . or whether the whole thing is imagination brought on by Paul's nonsense in the hospital. Just because she came and sat every day for five minutes by my bed. . . . Why don't I forget about her? But he

knew that every effort to forget would only increase his longing for her. And he knew, too, that his fit of madness would end nowhere, just as it had begun nowhere.

His days at the Academy, the evenings with Paul were a good refuge, and they passed more lightly than he expected. Slowly her figure began to fade from his imagination. Let her keep her secret—harlot or communist. Small comfort. In his loneliness he felt as if between him and the world a monstrous shadow were arising. At first the sensation swept over him vaguely, and only for a moment, then it began more and more to assume a definite shape, and came to haunt him. One night he picked up a dark little waitress from a confectioner's shop. When he kissed her good-night, a terrifying pain filled him—she is leaving me . . . they have all left me . . . I am alone. You can't console yourself with Paul's cynicism: Man is born to be a lonely beast. No, the whole meaning of life is never to be lonely.

He was attached to Paul with a shy, childish stubbornness. From the Academy he went to the boy's room every day, and sometimes they spent the evening together.

"I'll introduce you later on to the children." This was how Paul described his friends. "Then I hope you will be with us every evening."

Several weeks went by before Kadar met Paul's parents. The room was filled with cigarette smoke; it was past eleven o'clock, when the door opened and a man in evening dress came in—tall, grey at the temples, built like a cavalry officer. With him was a handsome woman, wonderfully dressed and made up.

"Good evening," said the woman in a deep, warm voice. "We've just come from the Opera, and the ser-

vant said the new tutor was still here. . . . Isn't it rather too late to be studying? "

"Oh, we weren't studying—only talking," said Kadar, slightly embarrassed. He looked at the boy, who was pushing books and papers about on the desk, then bowed awkwardly and introduced himself.

"You are not Viennese, are you? " The man spoke in a tired, husky voice. "I can tell that by your accent."

"No, I am Hungarian."

"Ah, Hungarian . . . how very interesting."

"Paul, my dear," the woman interrupted, "the smell of your poisonous cigarettes is all over the house. You ought to smoke better ones."

The boy looked up and glanced at Kadar. "Can you give me some better ones? "

"Of course," said the man. "I'll see that you get a couple of boxes." He turned back to Kadar. "Don't you find it difficult to coach in a foreign language? "

Kadar felt the edge of the question pointed against Paul. "Oh, not at all. I'm really a Transylvanian Saxon, you see, and our mother-tongue is German. Anyway, this is my second year in Vienna."

"I see," said the woman. "And are you satisfied with your pupil? "

"Paul is an excellent . . ." but the boy's stern look stopped him. He was silent for a moment, then went on, "I am very pleased with the results so far."

"You are pleased," repeated Herr Hartung, slightly imitating Kadar's tone. "Good. I hope we'll meet another time, Herr . . . may I ask your name again? . . . Yes, of course, Herr Kadar. Don't work too hard to-night." He held out his hand with a huge signet ring of blue carved stone on the fourth finger. The woman

also gave him her hand; in its long black glove, it was incredibly thin and delicate. They went out, and five minutes later the footman entered, bringing five large flat tins.

"The better cigarettes. Take a couple of boxes home with you." Paul stood turning a box round and round in his hands, then said half to himself, half to Kadar, "Do you think they would let me move out of here?"

Kadar had something to wonder about. Why should Paul have taken such a fancy to him? What could be his object when he reversed their official relations, and instead of allowing Kadar to tutor him in math and chemistry, was himself giving lessons . . . in all kinds of subjects, in things Kadar had never known existed. Books: he found how little Kadar knew of literature, and lent him the latest German and Austrian, English, American, and French volumes. Kadar learned new names that were transformed into persons; empty words became clear definitions; and much that was stored away in some unused corner of his brain came to life and took on living significance. Music: Paul's electric phonograph gave him singers, violinists, the C  zar Franck sonata. . . .

And besides all this, the boy gave him money—a great deal of money—so much that Kadar's remaining Swiss bills lay almost untouched in the box underneath his shirts. Paul paid him enough for these semi-serious lessons to cover practically all his expenses.

What would happen when this came to an end? He dismissed the thought. Life ends too, so I won't think about it.

Wirth's visits became less frequent. He was probably working hard on his dissertation, Paul explained. "And then he is crazy about a woman who is not one of us."

Nevertheless Wirth continued to spend at least one night a week with them. He would listen in silence to the conversation between the other two, only rarely giving an opinion contrary to theirs, and this Paul tacitly accepted.

"How can you take what Wirth says for granted?" Kadar objected once.

"Why not? He's usually right," Paul laughed. "And he has made me what I am."

One day Paul arranged for Kadar to meet Rosette—on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock, in the Old German room of the Museum. When Kadar arrived the girl was already waiting, seated on the crimson plush sofa in the centre of the hall, turning the pages of the catalogue. From the door he looked at her: supple, slender figure, long slim legs, hair short and fair, cheeks a healthy pink. He guessed she was Rosette; but Paul had not come, and he did not dare to speak to her. Then she saw him.

"Aren't you Paul's friend? Come here and sit down . . . I can't think what is keeping Paul."

He was uncomfortable, afraid that he could not find anything to say.

"Let's begin as if we were old friends. I know all about you—Paul talks of you all the time." She chattered on, and her quiet, pleasant manner loosened his tongue. He did not notice how quickly the time passed.

"I don't like him particularly,"—Rosette was talking of Wirth—"He drives Paul deliberately into a bitter sort of cynicism. I know he's clever, and I think he could be an excellent doctor . . . if something weren't wrong with him. If he is really a pessimist, he won't ever be successful at helping other people with their mental

problems; and if he only pretends to be, then he is using Paul for his experiments. I do think he is experimenting—Paul sometimes comes to me in the most terrible fit of depression. But I can usually talk him out of it.”

Kadar looked at her in admiration. How could this youngster have such mature ideas? She went on talking of Paul, of herself, and finally of companionate marriage.

“Sooner or later everyone will realize that companionate marriage is the only sensible and reasonable arrangement. Paul and I have been living together for almost a year. Of course, there are certain obstacles—Vienna is not New York. But we have the satisfaction of knowing that our youth and energy haven’t been sacrificed to stupidity and unhealthy pretence. Do you think I will be any the worse wife if I ever marry Paul or another man before a registrar or priest?”

Kadar stared at her. Could she and Paul have planned this remarkable speech to make a fool of him?

“And if the dull, middle-class brain thinks we are offending the established moral code. . . .”

Kadar could stand it no longer. “Aren’t you ashamed of yourself . . . you baby!”

“Is that how you feel?” said Rosette with mild irony. “Do you live in the moon or the middle ages? Look at that picture by Lucas Cranach over there. . . .”

“No, don’t be angry, Rosette. But I’ve only just met you, and maybe you are right—I don’t know.”

“Oh,” she said, “I understand. You come from a class that looks at these things as the immorality of the city and of society. But when you begin to understand the real meaning behind what I say. . . .”

Paul dashed in, out of breath but in high spirits. “Forgive me for being late. Father gave me a Sunday

audience, and I couldn't pass up the chance to tell him my plans for the summer. I don't think he'll object, but if he does I'll insist on going with mother and the children. . . . I'm glad you two found each other. Toni, are you in love with her already?"

They walked up and down the halls, looking at the pictures until one o'clock, then went on to a small beer garden in the inner city, where they found some of Rosette's and Paul's friends. "This is Toni Kadar—I've told you about him before." In half an hour Kadar felt as if he had known them all for years—their light-heartedness and exuberance swept him off his feet.

He was with them often after that, and gradually began to acquire their manner and words. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that they were pretending, playing circus with him; he saw and heard things that made him wonder whether he could believe his eyes and ears. They were a cheerful crowd, most of them between sixteen and eighteen, apparently free from everyday worries and cares. They amused themselves with answering social, moral and sexual problems to their own satisfaction, played gracefully with big words, and demanded acknowledgment of their "liberated lives." Naturally, the pleasures of free love were more interesting to them than the responsibilities and consequences of living a liberated life. But, with the clear conscience of people who were convinced that they could do no wrong, they played their game of modern Hansel and Gretel, in which the actors, with their artistic talent, literary patter, and wisdom of hygiene, with their private rooms and their own latchkeys, danced to the tune of an "enlightened era."

Kadar became accustomed not only to their manner,

but to their way of living. He began to regard companionate marriage as something quite natural and justified by its very existence. Life was meant to be lived, and no time was to be wasted. Robert and Annie were going to spend Easter at Salzburg; Hella and Arno had taken a new apartment; all this was openly discussed at parties.

And their fathers and mothers? They were, for the most part, decent lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants—the usual sort of well-to-do, middle-class Viennese. Most of them suspected what was going on, but they preferred to make themselves believe that they knew nothing about it.

Kadar remembered Mariska Gazda, and how she would have died rather than let Aunt Anna know that she was not married to the Italian officer. It was all so far away . . . Mariska, Aunt Anna, Uncle Rudi, the scene on the stairs of the Budapest Academy, Vavrinetz and the rubber truncheon, Agota. . . .

The winter was almost over. Kadar worked hard for his second examination, nerves on edge; but his mind was filled with other things—with novels and plays and concerts; with Paul, Rosette and the children, with his bitter craving for money, and most of all with a girl called Tilly, who was the reason for the disappearance of his Swiss bills. Tilly Baum, eighteen years old, a student of music at the Conservatory. She was short and lithe, with wrists so slim that Kadar wondered why they did not break under the force she put into her playing. Small scattered freckles gave a certain piquant charm to her white, translucent skin. Her hair was flaming red; when she let it down it reached below her waist.

Tilly lived on a quiet street far out, in a great villa with

a huge garden round it. Her father, a ginger-haired, fat little Jew, looked lost in the high-ceilinged rooms, among the gigantic pieces of furniture and vast expanses of tapestry. He worshipped the child with a neurotic devotion—showered her with clothes and jewellery that she never wore, and deposited a million francs in her name in a bank in Switzerland.

Kadar met her one night at Rosette's, and walked home with her. "I'm having a party to-morrow night," she said when they reached the gate. "You may come if you like." He was there the next evening, and after that they met every day, until a boy called Norbert lost his usual good temper.

"Norbert acted like a madman to-day," said Tilly one night when Kadar came alone for dinner. "He made a terrible fool of himself when I sent him away."

"Why did you do that?"

"Don't pretend. You know I got rid of him because of you."

Tilly very seldom spoke of her father. "He is the best man in the world, and one of the cleverest, but I am afraid he is a very unhappy person," she said once.

"Why unhappy?"

She did not answer. Later she told him that her mother had been an actress in Brünn. There had been rumors about her life before she married Herr Baum. But these were things of the past, old and distant things. Tilly's eyes—great, bright, steel-blue eyes—her voice, her delicate body, her ideals, these were fresh and alive.

They were in love: Kadar submissively, desiring only to give without receiving; Tilly with all the languor of her race in every word and gesture, with the feverishness of her artist's temperament, with the passion of a greedy

child, with the weariness of satiety. Kadar was always the same; Tilly always different, unpredictable. She was constant only in her love of music. For hours every day she practised in the music-room, that was empty except for the huge piano and a few chairs. Adjoining it was the room in which she slept. She allowed no one to come uninvited into her part of the house. The rest of the whole tremendous villa was almost empty. When her father was at home, he spent his time in the smoking-room. Sometimes, if she was alone, he came in for half an hour and listened to her play.

Kadar spent delirious evenings in the music-room, fascinated by her hands on the black and white keys. One night he sat listening for two hours, until at last she stopped abruptly and slammed down the lid of the piano. "I can't play. Oh, I can't! . . ." She stood up and stretched her cat-like body.

"Thank you, Tilly. . . ."

Filled with the passion of the music, she kissed him feverishly.

Back in his room he stood looking at a half-finished plan on the drawing board. With words and figures dancing before his eyes, every nerve in his body aching for Tilly, with the craving for money and power and the fear of the future in every breath he took, he lay until three o'clock in the morning staring out into the darkness. Nerves and money—both were nearly exhausted. He had bought new clothes from a fashionable tailor, fine underwear, and shoes. He had got into the habit of taking taxis, because Tilly exploded in a fit of temper if he kept her waiting an instant. Restaurants, cabarets, theatres, all cost money, although Tilly seldom let him pay, and Paul, when he was along, always insisted on

being host. He had to learn to dance, and he was ashamed of his long legs and wooden movements on the floor. Paul had given him a suit of evening clothes and paid him four times the usual fee for tutoring. But what will happen when this is over? I've spent as much money in the last three months as in eighteen before. That other was not life—this is how I must live. I must have money. I will have money. I will be rich—a famous architect—one big job after another. Luck will come my way. I will have money . . . I will meet someone out of the clear sky who can help me somehow to get money. And if I were to marry Tilly? . . . Tilly with her millions, her enormous house, her fat little father. . . . He remembered how she had lain one night, her delicate little body naked and limp on the enormous bed. With closed eyes he lay beside her, trembling from their last embrace. And when in the soft light he opened his eyes and saw the intangible wonder of her fragile, boyish little figure and touched her with freshly awakened desire, she said, incredibly cold: "Oh, go away! Go away! Go away!" He remembered that night, and he knew that Tilly would never be his wife. Tilly in her nakedness was worth more than all her millions; and in her jewels and her palace she was less desirable than poverty. No, someday Tilly would send him away without thinking twice about it, or . . . perhaps someday he would leave her without saying good-bye. . . .

Vienna was rapidly slipping down the steep hill of economic ruin. The air was heavy with the rotten odor of collapse. Demonstrations of communists, counter-demonstrations of reactionaries, expensive automobiles of profiteers, beggars' rags, war cripples on crutches, unemployed riots, all-night revels in cabarets, foreign

tourists, starvation, feasting: Vienna was a turbulent sea on which Paul and his friends cheerfully sailed their curious luxury-yacht. They lived their self-centred, carefree lives, watching the misery of others with a supercilious, cool indifference.

Kadar began to realise that they were really strangers to him—strangers whose attitude he copied with some success, but who also regarded him as an alien. For Paul's sake, and perhaps out of consideration for Tilly, he was still tolerated. He was drifting with them, but he was not one of them. And he did not care. Nothing was worth bothering about—nothing mattered except the things that were pleasant or exciting. The spring was lovely, filled with desire and satisfaction and joys he had never dreamed of. And there were days when he was convinced that this was the only sort of life that led anywhere.

Towards the end of June the term was finished. So was his money—and so probably his affair with Tilly too. He had come through his second year examinations with fair success. Board and lodging were paid till the end of July, but in the cash box there remained only a very few small bills. Tilly was away with her father, traveling in Switzerland and Italy until fall. He had seen her for the last time one quiet June night . . . “Well, good-bye, Toni, till fall, or . . . forever. . . .” He loved her at that moment—terribly, unbearably. The nights after she was gone were filled with the sound of her voice, the memory of her face, her kisses, her frail hands so curiously strong when she played. He could never understand her—her changing moods, her thousand little self-contradictions. Tilly could never be understood . . . and never forgotten.

In the midst of these empty, idle days, Paul unexpectedly rushed in and roused him. "You know I've been making plans for the summer, and now my father says it's all right. If you like you can come with me to London next week. It's all arranged—money, everything. You'll be my guest, of course."

The next day they bought tickets: Basle-Paris-Calais-Dover-London. There were complications about Kadar's passport—the British Consulate refused to grant a visa to a Hungarian subject. But Herr Hartung's legal office got him an Austrian passport within twenty-four hours, and the difficulties about a British visa were solved.

Paul was afire with excitement. "Do you know what it means to me to go to London, after living all my life in a place like Vienna?" he cried. "It's the greatest city in the world."

The morning came when they climbed into the through-train marked *Wien-West-Paris Est*. Seven noisy, cheerful boys and girls were going with them as far as Salzburg. During the half-hour stop in Salzburg, Rosette and Paul walked up and down the platform, and then, when the conductors began to slam and lock the car doors, they kissed each other. A grey shadow fell across the girl's flushed face.

"Oh, Paul!" She still held his hand as he stood on the steps of the slowly moving train. "I know I ought to go with you. Paul! wire me the minute you get there and write me every day. Toni—look after him!"

Paul wandered restlessly through the corridors from one end of the train to the other, talking to passengers. One of them was a Hungarian engineer on his way to England, and from there to Melbourne. "Would you

like to come over to his compartment, Toni? He seems like an interesting person."

Kadar felt a sudden desire to hear and speak Hungarian, but the next instant he changed his mind. Without any reason at all, he decided he did not want to see Hungarian engineers. Later it occurred to him that by this time Vavrinetz might have become an engineer.

It was evening when the train reached Paris, *Gare de l'Est*. In two hours they would start again from the *Gare du Nord* for Calais. From the taxi window they looked out on the busy, noisy, glittering Paris night. When the cab was held up once in a traffic jam, a girl in a funny little white hat rapped on the window. Porters, luggage, the long green carriage marked *Paris Nord—Calais Maritime—London, Victoria Station*.

9

"You can stroll in Vienna, just walk without any definite aim. Nobody will tell you where to go or what to do, and your time is your own. But London is quite different. London compels you to decide in advance on a program and to stick to it. Here I have to make up my mind to visit Parliament at ten o'clock, the National Gallery at noon, the British Museum at three. I know that I have to go—that I can't escape. And I'm not very happy about it. It is Paul's fault; he is too eager. He expected a great deal of London, and his mind is made up to get a great deal. He says we are on a student-trip and can't just leave it to chance to show us everything we should see. Six or eight weeks is either too long or too short a time to spend here—more than enough to

have a glance at everything worth seeing, but not sufficient for wandering with no purpose through the streets just for pleasure. Perhaps I am depressed because I feel like a stranger. I am a stranger—I am afraid of unknown streets filled with unknown people, whose language I cannot speak. Still, I'm not tired; I've not yet had my fill, and I'm certainly not blasé about it. But this living by a perfectly arranged time-table makes me feel as if I were missing adventures that can only happen by sheer chance. We know practically nobody in or outside our boarding-house. The people to whom Paul had a letter of introduction have been away in Scotland ever since May. Now and then we spend the evening with two girls we met one Saturday when we were out driving. Their Ford had broken down in the middle of the road and we gave them a tow back to town. One of them is called Zia Gordon—she works in a glass importer's office. The other is Yomaya, a Hindu from Cashmere who is studying in the University here. I can't tell you all the things I feel about London. Shall I say that I do not feel at home? That after three weeks here I am still not disappointed, but that I expect no new sensations? No, I am not happy here. Perhaps it is because I long so terribly for you, Tilly my dearest. . . .”

“ You can believe me that no one is more surprised than I am to be in London. I came quite unexpectedly with my pupil—or rather my friend, Paul Hartung. The trip was very pleasant. There was a Hungarian engineer in our train, but I did not speak to him. We are staying at a boarding-house here, where the food is very good. I am learning a great deal, and if I am not satisfied, I ought to be, for I have no worries—my pupil pays all my

expenses. The other day a curious thing happened—I was walking along one of the main streets outside a fashionable hotel when suddenly I ran across an old school-friend of mine. Maybe you will remember him—Imre Vidor. It was awfully exciting to see him so far away from home. He has been in England for three years, studying at the University of Cambridge, and was in London just for the day on his way to Ostende where his parents are spending the summer. They are very rich. He was pleasant to me and gave me his address in Cambridge and London. If we are still here when he comes back in September he asked us to look him up. You can imagine how good it was to speak Hungarian after hearing hardly anything but a strange language for weeks. All the more so because at school Vidor was always haughty with us poorer boys. And now I can only say that I have not enough ink and paper to tell how many wonderful things I have seen. . . .”

“ Please do not say a word to Rosette about what I am going to tell you. And if you write to Paul don’t let him suspect that I have complained to you. Because I am complaining, Ludwig, although it may sound stupid and ungrateful. The trip to London is anything but a success so far as I am concerned. Paul lives in a state of feverish agitation—you know his restless, insatiable disposition. The rush to see everything, with no relaxation at all, has taken away my capacity to enjoy anything. Our weeks have been an endless procession of books, pictures, monuments and shows. I can’t sort out my impressions, much less digest them. I can’t keep up with him, but I don’t want to leave him alone. Am I worrying about Paul, or about myself? I’m not sure which. Anyway,

this is what bothers me now: the rushing around is finished—we spend all our time chasing excitement with two girls, one Scottish and the other a Hindu called Yomaya. Has Paul told you about her? We towed their car to a garage one day and took them home. After that no more museums and galleries. Instead we dance in night-clubs till the last lights are out and then go home with the two girls. They have a three-room apartment in Maida Vale. We generally get back here about noon, and sleep till evening. I haven't the strength to stop Paul—and when it comes to that I am just as much to blame as he is. I'm too weak to prevent our student-trip from becoming an adventure that reduces London to a simple bedroom such as could be had anywhere. Paul's will is stronger than mine, and I confess I don't understand myself. Do you think I am becoming neurotic? Maybe I'm only middle-class—or maybe I just need sleep. Tonight at seven we are meeting the girls at the Kit Kat Restaurant. . . .”

10

It was daybreak when they got back to their lodgings. Kadar awoke later in the morning with sore eyes and aching head. Paul was already up, and stood, naked to the waist, a towel wrapped round his hips, before the mirror, his head almost touching the glass, his eyes glassy and terrified.

“What are you doing?” Kadar called out to him. Paul turned round with a strange jerk; his face was chalk white.

“Oh, nothing,” he said in an empty, colorless voice. “I didn't know you were awake.”

"You look terrible. What's the matter? Too much drink?"

"Maybe." Paul looked sharply again into the mirror and began to get dressed.

"Aren't you going to have a bath?"

"No, I think I've caught a chill." Nothing more was said. As Paul threw on his clothes the color returned to his cheeks; nothing seemed to be wrong with him—except for the strange look in his eyes. "I'm off down town to the bank. I'll be back by one." And he left the room.

Kadar dropped back on to the pillow and dozed, woke after eleven, took a bath and had his breakfast. With an effort he forced himself to leave the house. At the corner he boarded a bus that took him to Oxford Circus, and from there he walked home. When he opened the door he found Paul standing in front of the mirror, his collar open.

"What's the matter? Are you sick?" Kadar asked.

The boy looked away. "No, I'm all right." He walked to the window, came back to the mirror, then with a jerk turned to Kadar. "Look here, Toni, I'm in terrible trouble. . . ." His voice was hollow and strangely deep.

"For God's sake what is it?"

"Toni," his voice changed to a thin, childish treble, "I've got . . . Yomaya gave me a . . . disease."

Kadar's heart stood still. "God! Syphilis?"

Paul's face twisted into an ugly mask. "Yes. I've just come from the doctor. He made a blood test, and the result is . . . positive."

Kadar could not answer. He dropped into a chair and stared at the boy, like a marionette whose wires have been dropped by the showman. Neither of them spoke

for minutes that seemed years. Paul stood motionless between Kadar and the mirror.

"For God's sake . . . why are you staring at me like that?" he groaned.

The sound roused Kadar from his numbness. "What shall we do now?" he said weakly, with deep shame at his helplessness. The boy needed advice, not questions.

"We must go home at once . . . I can't stay here. . . ."

A horrible, cold fear ran over Kadar, as he thought of something Wirth had once said about the increased danger of the disease contracted from Orientals. Had Paul thought of it too? He did not dare to ask. Paul stared again into the glass, two great tears in the corners of his eyes, then turned round—all his movements were abrupt and clumsy now.

"Toni, I can't do anything here . . . let's pack our things this afternoon. I'll get money at the bank tomorrow morning, and we'll leave by the next train."

Kadar looked into his young, terror-stricken face. "There is only one thing I can do—go to him, put my arm around him, and comfort him." But he could not move from where he sat. A cold snake of nausea coiled itself about his body and held him. He knew that if Paul came near him and touched him he would shrink back.

"And what about to-night?" he asked, only to break the agonizing silence.

"No!" Paul shrieked. "I don't want to see anybody. By God, no! . . . They can wait for us forever at the Kit Kat. . . . But they won't wait. They will telephone us maybe . . . and then . . . go off with someone else. . . ."

He was sullen for a while, then hysterically restless. The servant brought in their trunks and suitcases. Underwear and clothes were dragged from wardrobes

and stuffed into bags with frenzied, inefficient haste. They spent two hours at it, but what did it matter? After it was finished there was nothing to do for the rest of the afternoon. By five o'clock the luggage was ready. Paul wasted time deliberately. He attended to the minutest details simply to occupy his mind; he paid the bill after discussing every item, ran out of the house and returned with four boxes of cigarettes, inspected his passport ten times, his letter of credit twenty times.

"I'll cash the balance as soon as the bank opens. There are sixty-eight pounds left. . . . Then I'll buy the tickets."

They could think of nothing else to do. Time was an endless, sticky mass that could not be moved. Silence. Kadar stood by the window looking out into the street, indescribable bitterness grinding his heart. What will happen now? What will Paul do? His parents—maybe they won't care very much. Wirth—Kadar thought guiltily of him. Wirth would say, "Couldn't you look after him?" Rosette—God, Rosette, something terrible has happened. Your Paul. . . . And Yomaya, the slender little Hindu, with her black hair and her brown skin, the sweet companion with poison in her blood and damnation in her kisses. . . . "I can't resist her. Leave me alone, Toni," Paul had said once. "It's the strangeness of her I can't resist." He had said it like an old roué who has not much more time to spare. She was no prettier than Rosette, but different, with her great innocent, almond-shaped eyes, with her quiet, foreign-sounding, husky voice which always seemed to sing—with poison running in her veins. . . .

Paul went to bed without any supper before it was dark. The maid brought them some cold meat and tea

on a tray. Kadar swallowed a few mouthfuls with difficulty, then went to bed too. After midnight he awoke from a deep, dull stupor with the unpleasant consciousness that somebody was walking round the room. He sat up in bed. Paul was at the table, a cold cutlet, left from supper, in his hand.

"I can't sleep," he whispered. "I'm terribly hungry."

Kadar almost smiled. Paul in the dim light, barefoot, in blue silk pajamas, the piece of cold meat in his hand. "Go on and eat. Then you can sleep." Kadar lay back. "Go on and eat, Paul, eat the cold cutlet," he murmured, and fell asleep again.

He dreamed—he did not remember it till months later : he sees Paul falling through space, prone on his back, his limbs stretched out, falling without moving. . . . If I should grab at him I could still catch him. . . . He reaches out for Paul and loses his own balance. He too is falling, but he cannot overtake Paul. The distance between them remains the same as they fall. Somewhere, at the bottom of the boundless abyss, there is a huge, shiny brown rock—a crash—Paul's head strikes the stone with a sickening thud—

He awoke suddenly, all sleepiness gone from him—only a million needles pricking his brain wide awake. The thud was followed by a quiet, rustling noise, the passage of wind across a tight-stretched linen sheet. A deadly chill numbed him.

"Paul! . . . Paul! . . . Paul, are you asleep? . . . Paul!" With a leap he is out of bed, the light is switched on. Paul—Paul is not in his bed—or—he tears away the light blanket. Paul is lying on his back, his right leg pulled up. In his blue pajamas, and—and—his right arm and the upper part of his body lie under—

neath the pillow, which is firmly in the grip of his left arm—and Kadar knew with absolute, dreadful certainty what had happened. He did not dare to lift up the pillow, stood nauseated for a moment, then his frantic hand rang the bell.

In three minutes the whole house was aroused. An old Swedish physician, a Dr. Ryborg, who lived in one of the rooms, came in. A car drove up—he could hear its engine swirring—the door of the main entrance opened and closed.

The room was filled with terrified, inquisitive people in bath robes and pajamas, watching. . . . The doctor, with gentle hands, raised the arm from the pillow, straightened it out along the body, and lifted up the pillow. Paul's face was waxen—his mouth rigid, twisted, ghastly—a thick stream of blood poured from its corner down the chin into a pool beneath his head—under his right hand a small pistol, glittering, blue.

Everything that followed was dreamlike, strange, incomprehensible. Men came, in blue uniforms and caps; then a policeman, and another; a man in plain clothes—enormous moustache and a very loud voice. They all fell upon him with questions, most of which he could not understand, but even if he could, his voice was gone. The Swedish doctor asked him questions in German: Did he know, or have any idea, or theory?

“No, no, no. I don't know anything. I know nothing, nothing . . . I know nothing. . . .” He ought to tell this man that Paul had found out yesterday. But the man with the big moustache came up to him with two slips of paper he had found on the table by the supper tray—blue-lined pages torn out of Paul's note-book, and Paul's hurried, disorderly handwriting. He must have

written by the dim light that came from the street through the half-lowered shades. On one of the slips were incoherent English phrases: To the coroner—I have an incurable disease—this is the cause of my suicide—I bought it this morning at a shop—I want to be cremated in London—please give the rest of my money to my friend—would it be possible to say I was in an accident—(the next line was crossed out, but it was legible) tell my parents merely that my suicide—

On the other slip were German words: Toni, if you see them in Vienna tell them that they were the cause of it. If possible make Rosette believe that it was a street accident.

After the body was carried away, the detective made an inventory of Paul's belongings, examining every article and asking, "Whose is this—yours or the suicide's?" He took the pistol and the two notes away with him. Kadar shivered and felt that he must vomit. The doctor gave him a small cup of hot bromide solution that choked him as he gulped it down. Paul wanted Rosette not to know . . . Rosette must never find out. . . .

The landlady knocked and came in, holding out some money in her hand. "I must ask you—you will understand—I beg of you to leave at once—the reputation of my house. . . ."

"Of course." He could not stay here any longer, alone in this room. . . . Rosette must never find out. . . . Herr Hartung, I stood by your son's death bed. It was like this: he had an affair with a young Hindu girl . . . he asked me to tell you that you are . . . May I ask your name again? . . . Ah, yes, Herr Kadar. . . . Your son, Paul Hartung—he was your son, wasn't he? . . . My son? So he was. Good. Thank you. . . .

He ran to the washstand and swallowed three glasses of water. It had a queer taste—the mouth-wash glass of course—Paul's glass. He quivered with terror, then suddenly he vomited.

It happened like this, Rosette: we were waiting for a bus and Paul slipped and fell. You see, the buses tear along at a terrific speed in London, that is, when they are not hindered too much by traffic. We were just going to a picture gallery, to see a collection of . . . Indian paintings. . . .

A knock at the door—a policeman with a summons to appear at eleven o'clock at the Bow Street Station. He did not know how he reached Bow Street. They asked for his passport—he could understand that much—but they could get no further, and had to find an interpreter.

Why had they come to London? Whom had they met? What was the motive for suicide? What disease? What doctor had diagnosed it?—Question after question. He tried to give short, precise answers. The man with the big moustache—he was there too—took his arm firmly and led him to a chair. "Aren't you feeling well? Do you want a glass of water?" Kadar, remembering the mouth-wash glass, made a frantic, cramped gesture.

"All right, all right." The man with the moustache turned to the inspector. "You know, those little Belgian pocket pistols can do more damage sometimes than a real one."

Then another terrible question: "Are you willing to inform the family and to make arrangements for the cremation?" He gasped a horrified "No."

"All right, then go home and wait there until the police settles matters with the Austrian Legation."

He told them that he was moving to the Grosvenor

Hotel, at Victoria Station—they had stayed there at first for a few days. He was allowed to leave.

Early Saturday morning a policeman came to the hotel with another summons. The family of the deceased had telegraphed the Austrian Legation to have the body cremated, and all arrangements had been made. . . . Here you are, will you please sign this paper as a witness?

How had he spent the time between Thursday and Saturday? It seemed to him that he had lived under a heavy, black blanket in the noisy, crowded hotel, and that the blanket excluded the outside world from his eyes and ears. He sat in his room and tried to think of nothing at all in a frantic effort to shut himself off from reality. Then slowly his frenzy died to a numb resignation. I mustn't let myself go. After all I was not responsible . . . Responsibility? But Paul is gone. It doesn't matter about responsibility, it's Paul that matters. I mustn't think about it any more. I must go home, to Budapest. . . . Millions of people die, but I'm still alive. Turko and Kormos with the big ears died, standing next to me in the trench, and little Feledy in the train. . . .

He walked all the way from Bow Street to Victoria, through the hot, summer afternoon. When he was back at the hotel, he spread out all his money before him. Four pounds seventeen shillings and some small change lay on the table. He went to the wardrobe, took out his clothes, and flung them into the suitcase. After paying the bill and giving tips, he had three pounds thirteen shillings left. "Shall we send your luggage to the station?"

No, he was going by bus. He stood with his suitcase outside the hotel. Buses thundered past him—which one

to take? Three pounds thirteen shillings. It would have been better. . . . A man in a grey tweed suit knocked his pipe against the lamppost, scattering a few ashes on Kadar's shoes. "Sorry," said the man, and jumped on a bus. It would have been better if . . . they had given him the pistol at the police station. There were surely five more cartridges in it.

11

He found a furnished room in Redburn Street, and for nearly two days sat brooding by the window. When at last he had climbed onto a bus the day before yesterday, he had no idea where it would take him. He could not remember why he got off and began to walk aimlessly, past a movie house, down a side street, around a corner. On the door of a house he saw a plate with the words: Board and room. He went in, and an unshaven, collarless man in shirt sleeves showed him up to the second floor back. Two shillings a day, payable in advance. The door had no key, not even a bolt, but what did it matter? He did not unpack his bag. Foolish to pay for a whole week in advance. He put the suitcase as it was into the wardrobe, locked it, dropped the key in his pocket. If anybody wanted to steal his things, let them, though he had no intention of leaving the room. He must sit and try to work things out. What things? Paul, of course. Paul is gone . . . and if I don't want to go mad I must make myself believe that he never even existed. I shall go home to Budapest. This whole business is over, finished. Vienna is finished. There is no Vienna and no Academy and . . . isn't Tilly in Vienna? And Rosette? . . . Dear Rosette, I am fulfilling a terribly

painful duty when I write to you. You have heard from the Hartungs surely by the time this letter reaches you . . . of course, the family gave their approval by telegram . . . I can't write to her. He knew that he would never write to Rosette. I will never see her again. No, that's not certain because if I should go to Vienna, or Budapest, or anywhere . . . anywhere so long as I can get away from this place with its strange language and museums and brown women . . . Home, go home. Which home? Budapest? Vienna? How? Railroads won't carry you for nothing.

Part of his money had gone for the bus fare, a packet of cigarettes, fourteen shillings for the room—a little over two pounds left. How far could he get with that? He had no idea how much money two pounds meant. He only felt that it was extremely little for the overwhelming distance between London and Vienna. His knees shook as he walked downstairs and succeeded in explaining to the unshaven man that he wanted him to call a travel agency and find out the cheapest way of getting to Vienna. In a cold sweat he tried to follow the telephone conversation: "Three pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence, third class."

Three pounds nineteen and six—and what about food, and shelter when he reached Vienna? Shapeless, strangling rage flared up in him, and he realised that he hated Paul for the predicament in which he had left him. He remembered that deadly pale childish face in the mirror, the frightened eyes, and suddenly he began to cry. . . .

It was broad daylight when at last he undressed, threw his clothes on the floor, and sank into bed. At four in the afternoon he awoke to find that the place had been

tidied—his clothes neatly folded on a chair. Of course they had come in, just to see—one never knows.

He got up and sat by the window again, thinking, thinking. But his memories were overshadowed by the desire to leave, to go home—no matter how, no matter what it cost. He had taken leave of Paul forever.

The next morning, as he stood with his razor in his hand, in front of the mirror, the sight of his own haggard face sent a chill through him for an instant; then a hard determination began to spread through his head and heart. I shall get over this—I must get over this.

Belgrave Square: Austrian Legation. He tried to keep his voice from trembling as he gave his name to a cheerful, bald-headed official.

“Oh, yes. I know—an extremely painful affair. . . . And what can I do for you? . . . To Vienna? . . . But as I understand it you are not an Austrian citizen. How could the Vienna police have given you an Austrian passport? It ought to be investigated. . . . I am very sorry but the Legation is not in a position. . . .”

Cadogan Square: Hungarian Legation. He waited a long time to see the monocled young secretary, with a bushy black moustache.

“I should like to get home to Budapest.”

“But I don’t quite understand this—you have an Austrian passport. The whole business is rather . . . leave me your passport and a pound for expenses. The Legation can make enquiries into what can be done for you, but I’m afraid you can’t expect us to pay your fare home. . . . Really, the Legation is not here for that purpose.”

Back in his room he began to write a letter: *Dear Uncle Rudi*—How can I sit here and wait for them to

send me money? . . . And in the evening, when hunger began to torture him, the paper still had nothing on it but *Dear Uncle Rudi*.

The next morning, to his surprise, he awoke with a clear, cool head. Leaving the house, he began to walk along slowly, reading every street name, every signboard. Through deserted side streets, thoroughfares, squares, he read inscriptions everywhere, and when he reached his room again, the names of thirty or forty streets were buzzing in his head, while the weariness of thirty or forty streets tingled in his body. Am I crazy? Why should I waste time walking along staring at signboards? He did not know. The same impatient, irritating feeling spread over him, as if he had put away something for safety but could not remember where or when. I know there is something I have to find.

The next morning he took a bus, got off somewhere among strange-looking houses and began to walk. At one o'clock he had some soup in a cheap restaurant, then wandered on until six.

On the fifth day the undulating greyness of the pavement rose before his eyes as he woke up, and when he stepped out of the house nausea swept over him at the sight of the grey asphalt. His strides were rhythmical, his breathing even. This kind of step can only be acquired in the army, when you are drilling or marching on the parade ground. Too bad you can't make use of the art at the front. *Garage Open Day and Night*—at the front you have to walk so as to display the smallest possible target—*Dental Surgeon*—but you don't have much chance for walking at all—*French Tailor*—and when you are retreating nobody cares how you walk—*B. Hayos, Coal*—everybody had other things to worry

about. He stopped short and turned back. *B. Hayos*, on a small, brass door-plate. *Hayos—Hajós?* It must be a corrupted Hungarian name. Without a moment's hesitation he opened the door and stepped into the office. A typist was sitting at a desk. "Yes, sir?"

"May I speak to Mr Hajós?" he said, giving the name the Hungarian pronunciation. Then he tried German. "*Sprechen Sie deutsch oder ungarisch?*"

The girl stared at him with big, stupid eyes, then called to someone. A fat, grey-haired woman came out of the other room. "*Was wollen Sie?*" she said in broken German, with suspicion in her voice.

"Aren't you Hungarian? The name sounds. . . ."

"Why?" demanded the woman sharply. "What do you want?"

He began a long story, but the woman cut him short after the first ten words. She was not obliged to give information to strangers, but if he had to know, Mr Hayos's father was Hungarian. Mr Hayos himself had been a British subject for more than forty years, and it was Mr Hayos's opinion that the Hungarians who fought on the side of the barbarian Huns during the War. . . .

He was in the street again. Mr Hayos—the Huns—a kind of bravado took hold of him: at least he had discovered what he had been searching for all these days: a Hungarian name.

Towards the beginning of the third week the world turned grey. A fine drizzle hung in the air. As he paced aimlessly up and down the damp streets, he sometimes felt an impulse to jump at the throat of the next person he met. Walking—walking. He stopped looking at signboards and name-plates. If I step on each stone in the sidewalk without touching the groove between, I'll

have luck. Unfortunately the slabs were of varying sizes, requiring sometimes a long and sometimes a short step. Why couldn't they make all paving stones the same shape? The sidewalks would be neater. My shoes are still good. They make good shoes in Vienna. Different shape from English shoes, though—pointed toes. Tilly used to have English shoes. Her feet were very narrow, with perfect, straight toes.

A bus nearly ran over him as he stepped off the curb. He shrank back and looked up: *Oxford Circus*. Suddenly he remembered—Langham Hotel was near Oxford Circus. Vidor will be staying there till the tenth of September, and to-day is the third. In a quarter of an hour he stood in the cool, quiet lobby. Vidor will help me. He was friendly when we met before. He will lend me some money to get home, and perhaps help me to get a job there.

“Mr Vidor is not in now.”

He picked out a comfortable chair in a corner and sat down. Vidor will help me. We were schoolmates, and the four or five pounds I need isn't very much. I have one pound left for extras. Am I going back to Budapest or to Vienna? Vienna is nearer, and after all why shouldn't I go to Vienna? Nobody cares—nobody need know—

He started up, blinked, and looked round embarrassed to see whether anyone had noticed that he had dozed off. No one had paid any attention to him.

“Mr Vidor is in now. Room 208. The page will take you up.”

The page knocked at a white lacquered door. “Come in,” a man's voice shouted. Vidor stood in the middle of the room, dressed in evening clothes. In an armchair sat a tall, fair young woman.

"Forgive me if I'm disturbing you. . . ." Kadar hesitated.

"But come in. It's quite all right, of course." His voice was polite. "I'm very glad to see you." He turned to the girl. "Mr Kadar—an old friend of mine . . . Miss Evelyn Campbell-Gray."

Kadar stammered an apology for his lack of English, and, turning very red, he said to Vidor in Hungarian: "I'm sorry—I came about something very important—could I see you alone?"

Vidor surveyed him quickly from head to toe: his shoes were—pointed—a bit dusty, but good; his clothes were well-made. "Of course. We could go down to the reading room."

He excused himself, Kadar made a clumsy bow, and the girl smiled.

In the reading room was a huge stained glass window showing St. George slaying the dragon. Kadar sat down stiffly opposite the window, his hands trembling on his knees, while Vidor stood beside a round table and lit a cigarette with slow, circumspect movements.

"Well, how are you, Kadar? I'm glad you looked me up. Too bad you didn't let me know before so we could spend the evening together. If you could go home and change, you might come with us anyway."

Kadar drew a deep breath. "Look here, Vidor, you must forgive me for coming like this . . . But I'm in a terrible jam, and I don't know a soul in London except you. . . ." He could get no further. Good God, I'm begging.

"Well," said Vidor, with lifted eyebrows, "what sort of jam?"

"I've got into a ghastly situation—and through no fault

of my own . . .” His face turned crimson. Vidor eyed him from behind a cloud of cigarette smoke, and his manner was so supercilious that Kadar’s humility turned to rebellious rage. He blew away the smoke that hung between them, and said abruptly: “Can you lend me some money?”

The other gave a short, wry laugh. “Money? What do you mean? Perhaps you will be good enough to explain . . .”

Kadar closed his eyes for a moment, swallowed painfully, and began to tell, not too coherently, the story he had prepared: “You know I came to London as the tutor of a wealthy young man from Vienna. . . . We were just ready to go back . . . a sudden accident . . . a bus crushed him to death . . . and now I’m down to one pound. For weeks I’ve been searching for some way out of it all. If you could lend me enough for the trip home. . . .”

A harsh wrinkle appeared between Vidor’s eyes, as he looked scornfully into Kadar’s face. “My dear Kadar,” he interrupted, “of course I deeply regret your unfortunate . . . adventure. But I’m sorry that I’m not in a position to. . . . The journey, even if you go third-class, costs money. You see, I, myself, have to live within certain limits—at least not too narrow limits—but in such a situation a loan would practically amount to a gift. If you won’t misunderstand me, however, I should be glad to give you a small amount. . . .” A whitish, ten-shilling bill appeared from somewhere in his hand.

Ten shillings . . . he is offering me ten shillings. If I were to knock it out of his hand and tell him to go to hell with it? Vidor’s patronizing voice went on, while the hand holding the ten-shilling note slowly withdrew: “Why don’t you ask your pupil’s parents? After all,

you can't be held responsible for the accident. It is their duty to help you." He stopped.

Kadar felt as if a huge, multi-coloured glass diving bell had descended from the ceiling to cover him and separate him from that voice. His ears were sealed by an overwhelming silence. The coloured window hurt his eyes, so that he had to close them for a moment. From a great distance—from a great depth—he could hear stray phrases: "The Hungarian Legation . . . its duty. . . ."

Suddenly he rose. "Thank you. Good-bye." He turned and left. Vidor followed him, but he walked on as if he were alone, staring at the thick carpet.

"I'm sorry if you have misunderstood—I don't want you to think . . ." Vidor murmured.

"Oh, never mind." Kadar walked on and down the stairs without looking back. Vidor stood at the banister watching him, then turned round, shrugged his shoulders, and went upstairs.

12

Kadar spent the next two days in his room, sitting on the bed or in a chair by the window, numb to all sensations, memories, thoughts. The room was quiet, his head was quiet. Then came the reaction—a feverish impulse to be moving. He rose very early, put on his best clothes and shoes, whistled as he shaved, ordered breakfast, and drank his tea burning hot. When he left the house he was still munching a piece of toast. He raced through the streets and boarded, at random, a bus marked London Bridge.

The river glistened gold-brown in the sunshine. On a

small steamer moored to a landing pier a sailor was ringing a little brass bell with a clear, fresh tone. A board fastened to the side of the boat read *Cattle Market—Deptford*. Kadar ran from the bridge to the lower embankment, bought a ticket from a man on the pier, and sat down on a bench in the stern. The propeller suddenly whipped the water into white foam, and the boat was off downstream.

Deptford—he had never been in that part of London. On the left of a disorderly open space a building was going up. Stacks of bricks, hillocks of sand, piles of boards. A long procession of oxen passed: *Cattle Market*. He strolled on past a fruit market, with hundreds of stalls filled with apples and bananas. A fat woman in a shawl and apron shouted to him: "Get hold of this 'ere push-cart. I'll pay you sixpence from now till noon." He stared at her and shook his head. "Sorry. Thought you was looking for work."

He turned down one of the streets leading away from the market place. It was a poor district with dilapidated houses. Sometimes a creaking van or horse truck rolled by—no taxis or private cars. He walked on and on. How long is this road? Does it go on forever? What is the use of walking here? He began to feel hungry and looked round for an eating-place. At last, opposite a factory building, he discovered a painted signboard: *Dining Room*. Suddenly his heart stood still. On the other side of the entrance were painted the words: *Hungarian Restaurant*. His hand trembled on the door knob so that he could scarcely turn it.

"*Jó napot.*"

A haggard boy stood behind the counter eyeing him vaguely, then without a word disappeared behind a glass

door. A moment later an old man with a beard came in, followed by the boy and a thin, hollow-cheeked woman of about thirty.

"Welcome. Are you Hungarian? How did you get here? Are you from Budapest? Who sent you?" The three of them eagerly, excitedly, hurled questions at him, without giving him time to answer. Finally he managed to explain that he had come quite by chance, and had just happened to see the word Hungarian on the sign outside.

"You see," the old man turned to his daughter. "It was a good thing to put back that board where it was before the War."

Kadar did not know what sort of people they were, but all his reserve fell away, and words held in for weeks poured out. He talked and talked in confused, half-finished sentences, revelling in the self-torment of his story. He told them about Paul, Vienna, the rubber truncheon in Budapest, Paul's suicide, the days of wandering in London, despair, hopelessness, helplessness in his voice. The three of them looked at him in alarm, and when at last he stopped, there was a painful, hollow silence. He spoke again, this time quietly: "And you? How did you get here?"

The question loosed the old man's tongue. The story began in 1905, when Pali, his eldest son, a metal worker in a Budapest factory, disappeared in order to avoid doing military service. A year later old Fodor got a letter from London: "I am well, working in a steel mill at Deptford. I am enclosing twelve pounds. Sell the inn and come to England. You can open an eating-place here opposite the works. There are Hungarian workmen and business will be good." They opened Fodor's Dining

Room across from the mill, and things went well. In 1912 Margit, the daughter, married John Summers, foreman in the works. During the War they had to put the Hungarian Restaurant sign in the cellar. Times were bad—investigations, police, continual danger of being interned. Summers did all he could for them. In 1915 he enlisted—Pali too, for he had become a British citizen. Summers was killed in 1916, and Pali was shot through the heart in a trench at Arras. The business went on—the War was over—money in the bank. Margit and Imre, the younger son, were still alive . . . and this was the first time they had met a Hungarian since 1914.

As Kadar listened to the old man, a feeling came over him—he did not know why—I am at home. He looked at Fodor: simple face, grey beard and hair, stout figure. If I had met him on the street, I shouldn't have taken him for a Hungarian. He turned to Margit: tired, white face, pleasant but dull; grey strands in her black hair; eyes a watery blue; large hands, red from hard work. The boy, Imre, was nineteen or twenty, and looked like any other London youngster of the slums. He knew only a few words of Hungarian.

Shall I ask them now? Or would it be better to come back to-morrow? No, this is my chance, but I must not seem too eager.

"Will you stay for dinner with us?" the old man interrupted his thoughts.

Instead of answering, Kadar decided to have it out. "Look here," he exclaimed, "I've told you who I am and what I've done, and what has happened to me. . . . Couldn't I stay here with you? Couldn't you give me a job until I find something else, or find a way to get

home?" Fodor is an inn-keeper, and this place is not the Langham Hotel. . . .

Next morning he packed his bag, and by noon was back at Fodor's.

"You can help in the diningroom for a while. We don't know how long we can keep you. You will have a bed and food—no wages, but you will get tips. That won't be much, but if you do extra work—like cleaning windows—we can pay you for that."

So he began.

Behind the big diningroom were the kitchen and four rooms that opened onto a dark narrow passage. The farthest room was his. He could have the bed next to the window. The other belonged to Mary, the kitchen maid, who had been with them for four years. She could pull an old curtain between the two beds.

The first afternoon he looked around: sat in the kitchen, walked up and down the street, talked to the old man and his son. At night he lay in the clean, hard bed, as satisfied as if it were the Ritz. Early the next morning his new life started. At six o'clock he was in the diningroom, a broom in his hand, a green apron round his waist; late that night he fell into bed so exhausted that he did not even glance at Mary asleep on her back, the blanket thrown off, her nightgown pulled up to her waist. He did not notice that she had forgotten to draw the curtain between them.

When he awoke at dawn, Mary was already in the kitchen. He pulled the blind and looked out onto the bare court behind the house. It was raining, and the sky was grey except for two streaks of brightness between the clouds in the far distance, behind tall factory chimneys. Pali Fodor was a brave private in the British army on the

Western front . . . Maybe he used to sleep in this room. Antal Kadar, brave sub-lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian army—I have a job. God! I have a job. I have food and a bed and half a wardrobe to put my things in, and a washbowl. A clean, warm wave of self-confidence swept over him as he turned on the tap and put his head underneath the stream of water.

Sweeping, scrubbing, window-cleaning, dusting, wiping tables and chairs—not bad. The only thing he hated was washing the endless dirty plates in hot, greasy, stinking water. His nose could not stand it; his stomach revolted, so that at first he could not swallow a mouthful of food. I will get used to it. Anyway, it is better than starving in the gutter.

He did get used to it. He got used to old Fodor with his changing moods; to silent Margit, who found in ceaseless work a refuge from her memories of her husband; to stupid Imre and to the untidy waitresses, to the soiled working-men who were his customers, to his broom and apron and dishwater. He got used to saying thank you for the pennies that customers left on the tables. They sometimes added up to a shilling or two a day.

And one night when he went to his room, he noticed Mary lying half-naked in bed, asleep. Mary, big and strong, not very young, but not old—he had never looked at her till then, had scarcely said two words to her. He came in quietly as usual and turned on the light without disturbing her. She lay on her back; the thin blanket, pressed down beneath her arms, showed clearly the outline of her body. Her nightgown had slipped away from one of her full, white breasts. He realized for the first time that she had never pulled the curtain between them

—and that he had not touched a woman since Zia, two months ago. Desire ran hot through his body, but the next instant everything turned brown before his eyes—brown like Yomaya's skin—and desire turned cold. He switched off the light, tiptoed to bed, and buried his head in the pillow. Milk trucks were rolling in the distance before he fell asleep.

Autumn came slyly, unexpectedly. One night, after closing hours, he looked into the deep, blue sky with flaming stars—next morning rain fell in torrents. Suddenly, without any transition, the weather turned bitterly cold. Fires had to be made—more work. He did not count the days, but he felt that he had spent a very long time in this place. Fodor and his daughter were good to him; he worked, and they gave him what they had promised. At first the hard work gave him long nights of death-like sleep; but gradually his back, his legs and hands, became used to difficult, tiresome movements, and there were nights of dreams and torturing sleeplessness. When he awoke after a nightmare, he dug his hands into his palms until it hurt, to keep from falling asleep again, and lay wondering, delving into the past. What am I coming to? What of ambition, books, music? What good is it that I wasn't killed in the War, or that the Roumanians didn't shoot me in the back, that I didn't starve to death or die of scarlet fever, that I wasn't poisoned by a woman. Why did something always save my life at the last minute? The answer came like a sledge hammer: you were saved for this—a servant's job in a filthy eating-house.

His life was slowly ground between the mill stones of stupid days and tortured nights. But sometimes the stones struck a spark: I will get out of this somehow.

Out of what? Why? Don't I live well? I eat and have a bed—what more do I want?

And then one winter night he awoke from a confused, enervating dream, and saw Mary sitting up in bed.

"Mary, aren't you asleep?" he whispered.

"No, I can't. Can you?"

Desire for her flamed up in a burning wave as he breathed the heavy, tepid air of the little room. He rose and went trembling to the other bed. . . . Well, Antal Kadar, what more do you want besides your green apron, the broom, food, a bath on Saturday, and Mary's humble embrace?

13

Nearly a year had gone by since he came to the Fodors'. He could speak English, his hands were coarse and red, he had friends among the factory workers, he knew the latest talk about football teams. Days of work gradually spun a thick, grey curtain between him and the past, Paul, books, architecture, his career. And nights in Mary's bed wove a veil that separated him from the memory of Tilly. Shadows and hopes faded and shrank. There was no need to think, and finally, even if he had wanted to, he could not remember.

One morning another Hungarian discovered the restaurant. Kadar in his green apron stood at the entrance, idly watching the street, when a man walked past, saw the sign, and said in Hungarian: "Well, I never! I didn't know there was a Hungarian place in London." And he eyed Kadar expectantly.

"Well, there is," Kadar answered, and held out his hand. "What are you doing here?"

Only Margit was at home, so the three of them sat down at a table, and Gyuri Toth—that was his name—began to talk. He was footman to Councillor Torday of the Hungarian Legation, in this hell of a big city. He had come to Deptford to look up a man who used to be Torday's footman, to discuss with him the question of a pair of riding-boots which could not be found.

The Hungarian Legation—Kadar remembered the glittering monocle in the eye of that elegant secretary who had said "You can't expect us to pay . . . the Legation is not in a position. . . ." And the beer turned bitter in his mouth. But he continued to listen patiently to Toth, who liked the sound of his own voice in Hungarian company, in the quiet diningroom that reeked of stale beer. Toth discussed the Councillor, a fine gentleman and a great favourite with the ladies; he talked of himself and how he had got his job in London.

"But the devil almost sent me to Africa. Would you believe it? A very funny business. Torday is on good terms with a widow who is Hungarian by birth. Her husband was a rich building contractor while he was alive. Gyuri, the Councillor said to me, Gyuri, she is a splendid woman. She has taken her husband's place as director of the company. You can't find such a thing in Hungary, he said, when he sent me once to her house with a bunch of flowers. I went up to her apartment in the Berkeley Hotel, and I said, I kiss your hands, Mrs Hutton, and I tell you she was glad to hear Hungarian spoken. She asked me all sorts of questions, and I don't know how, but it slipped out of my mouth: I shouldn't mind working for you myself, I said. I don't mind working for the Councillor, but he is always moving around, and I want to stay in London. She laughed, and said: But

I don't live in London, I live in South Africa, and I'm only here for a few months. . . ." Toth talked on, but the mill stones had stopped grinding for Kadar.

When a customer came in he jumped up to wait on him, and instead of sitting down again at the table with Toth, he went and found the telephone directory: Berkeley Hotel, Piccadilly.

14

"So you are an architect?" said Honka Hutton.

"No—only a student of architecture . . . I've passed two exams, but I know a good deal, and I have ideas."

The woman sat back in a large arm-chair, and Kadar perched on the edge of a low settee.

The morning after Toth's visit he had asked for a day off. He put on his best grey suit and went off to the West End for a Turkish bath. When he had reached the Berkeley Hotel his blood was tingling with the fever of a sleepless night, his skin with the freshness of the bath. The elevator shot him up to the fourth floor, and he was shown into the drawingroom of a luxurious suite. A pleasant-looking woman in the late twenties came into the room. She wore a simple, expensive black dress.

"So you are Hungarian?" Her voice was cool, but not unfriendly.

Kadar's tall, broad-shouldered figure, his well-cut suit and good shoes, his neat, fair hair, and clear, young eyes did not show that he was a beggar. And at that moment he felt that he was anything but a beggar. All his nerves were braced, he was off on the wings of adventure. He felt himself a dreamer of bold dreams, the field-marshal

of a decisive battle, a perpetrator—if necessary—of crimes.

He introduced himself with light assurance, and nonchalantly took the woman's hand and kissed it. He asked for a short interview, at the same time watching himself, listening to his own voice with a certain admiration—almost with amusement. God! for an actor I'm not bad . . . Or maybe I'm just ridiculous and don't know it. His speech was smooth, unfaltering.

He looked at her carefully: she was short, scarcely up to his shoulder, but her figure was good. It was plain that she had a will of her own and great energy, while at the same time there was an expression of charming gentleness in her healthy, sun-tanned face. Her short, coal-black hair fell across her forehead. Her eyes were black too. Kadar liked her long, shapely fingers as she lit a cigarette. She was decidedly attractive.

"Will you have one?" She pointed to the box of cigarettes. "So you are Hungarian . . . and. . ."

Yes, Hungarian, though he had left his country for good. He had lived in Vienna before he came to London about a year ago. Unfortunately conditions in Central Europe were not encouraging for an ambitious young man. The effects of the War. . . . What am I gabbling about; let's come to the point. . . . The Continent is suffering from the aftermath of the War—that is Feuerstein's sentence. . . . If a young man wants to get anywhere, he has to emigrate to America or—he glanced at her—to the colonies.

"Well, and what sort of plans have you made?"

He had no definite plans for the moment; he was living in London, and hoped to find a temporary post in some architect's office.

"So you are an architect?"

"No—only a student of architecture . . . I've passed two exams, but I know a good deal, and I have ideas."

A slight trace of dismay crossed her face. "Tell me, how did you know of me? How did you happen to come?"

"At the Legation . . ." Immediately he regretted the unwise reference. "That is, a friend of mine, who is often at the Legation, mentioned that you are Hungarian. . . ."

"I see," she said coolly. She stood up, the cigarette between her lips, then with a quick, sharp movement turned and looked straight into his face. "Look here, I don't know who you are, but I want a straightforward answer. Did you know that I am with a firm of building contractors? Did you?"

"Yes," he answered, as quietly as he could.

"I see. And you came to ask me for a job. Is that it?"

And now—all that was left was to fall on his knees and cry out the misery that was in his heart, to plead with the humility of a born beggar, or with the candor of a man born for a better fate, and not to stand up again until she promised him a job as a designer at four pounds a week. No! There was no half-way. No four pounds a week. He would have the whole world or nothing.

"No," he said, in a slightly supercilious voice. Every nerve was strained to the limit; his blue eyes smiled. "I don't want a place in a London office. It is very good of you, but—please don't misunderstand me—I'm rather beyond that." His hand, unasked, reached for the box of cigarettes, stopped midway, and slowly, without a tremble, descended to the edge of the table. He looked

straight and clear into the woman's eyes. "But—if you will take me to South Africa, I will go with you."

He found himself back in the street. His head whirled, but he was sure he had won the first round. She had not thrown him out. When he forced from his throat the words "I will go with you," her black eyes seemed astonished but not annoyed. She looked down and changed the subject. At first she began to ask questions about Hungary—she had left eleven years ago, at the age of seventeen, to marry Mr Hutton. In 1913 they had gone to live in Sydney, where Hutton represented his company; then to Port Elizabeth, South Africa. They had been there till last year, when the accident happened. Her eyes clouded. Last fall he had to fly to Ireland on important business, but the engine went wrong and the plane dropped like a stone just after it left the field. Hadn't Kadar read about it in the papers? Then she asked him about himself, and learned that his father owned a paper mill before the War; that he was now staying with friends who owned considerable property in a suburb of London. He had come to England last summer with a friend, a young Viennese millionaire who was killed in a street accident—hadn't she read about it in the papers? They talked again of South Africa. She had just made a new arrangement with the firm, whereby she kept her husband's shares and became the manager of the South African branch, not merely as a figure-head, but as a working director. She knew the commercial side of the business, because she had taken great interest in her husband's work during the four years they had lived in Port Elizabeth. But, quite apart from business, she liked the life there. She loved Hungary, though she had almost forgotten what it was like, and was always

glad to speak her own language. Recently a Hungarian footman had offered his services, and she had very nearly engaged him. . . . God! If I blush! . . . But his face did not change; he alone could hear the beating of his heart. He asked for permission to telephone her again in a few days; she nodded pleasantly, and he left.

As he walked slowly along Piccadilly, he knew that the first round was won. Her soft voice, with its slightly unusual accent, still rang in his ears. She was no beauty, but decidedly attractive; not too friendly, but amiable. He knew that from the corner of Berkeley Street and Piccadilly he was starting toward success, comfort—money. Money! At Piccadilly Circus he stopped and looked at his reflection in a large shop window. The grey suit must not be hung away, the green apron must never be tied round his waist again. The sky was grey and dull; every now and then a fine drizzle started. Shall I take a bus to London Bridge, or a taxi?

I will need a lot of things from now on. First of all, time—and money. Where can I get money? Certainly not from old Fodor; Margit has none of her own, and if she had, why should she give me any? He had one pound and some odd shillings. How far would that go? I have to get some money—everything depends on money.

Back at Deptford he remembered a public-house where there was a “wheel of fortune.” Once in Innsbruck I won three hundred korona at rummy. That was a fair game, but this is pure swindle, calculated for the stupidity of dock-hands, porters, cowherds and butcher-boys. No, I’ll ask old Fodor for a loan. “Uncle Fodor, I’ll pay it back in a week. I’m expecting rich relatives and I have to . . .” Nonsense. He could hear the old man growl: “If your relatives are rich, why should you spend money

on them?" The whole thing is wrong. I should have told her simply and honestly: "Look here, I am a servant, but I was made to be something better. Help me to get a job as a designer at four pounds a week. I could finish my studies. . . . I shall be grateful to you as long as I live."

He entered the public-house and found himself in front of the wheel of fortune. One pound nine shillings and fourpence were neither here nor there—it made no difference whether he had them or not. I was born in 1898. One and eight and nine and eight made twenty-six. He pressed a shilling in the slot marked twenty-six and turned the lever. The wheel revolved rapidly, then slowed down and stopped with the winning arrow pointing to one of its red sections. A bell tinkled in the machine and two shillings dropped into the container below. He pocketed one and placed the other shilling in the same slot. He pulled the lever, the disk raced round, stopped again on red; the bell rang—another two shillings. Another red field brought him two shillings for the third time. This could not go on forever. I came to Budapest in 1908; added up to eighteen, green. Green won. Kadar chuckled to himself. He glanced at the clock: half past two. Somebody behind him was watching. Another shilling on eighteen, but a purple section stopped opposite the arrow and the machine indicated with a spiteful rattle that he had lost. Never mind—I can't win every time. Another shilling on eighteen. Black won; the automaton rattled. Never mind; another on eighteen. Black again. Never mind: let's go on eighteen. Brown won. He was furious. A crowd assembled when he went to the bar to change his one-pound note into shillings. Back to the machine. Shortly

before three o'clock the wheel of fortune had swallowed his last shilling. He stepped back, and something prompted him to hit with his fist the grinning, round plate of glass on the machine. Then he burst out laughing. Someone else laughed too, and in a second the whole room was echoing with hilarious shouts.

"You're a real sport," said a ragged man with a clay pipe in his mouth. "You know how to lose; I'd have kicked the damned machine and the landlord as well, dirty swindler."

He was still laughing when he left the place. I've lost my last shilling, but I might have known from the start. Well, what does it matter—twenty-nine shillings or none? He rubbed his sweating palms on the sides of his coat, adjusted his hat, and strode on homewards.

Fodor was in his room, writing figures on a large sheet of paper, when Kadar entered. From the doorway he began to say that some old friends had arrived in London. No, not Hungarians, Viennese, and he would like to show them round, though he had no money at all. Could he take a few days off, say six or eight?

The old man eyed him morosely. "Friends—sight-seers? I don't mind. I don't like to see a young man like you doing no work for a week, but if you've set your heart on it, all right. But you can't live here for nothing, so you can stay somewhere else while you're off, or if you want to stay here, you can pay for your lodging and breakfast—say eighteen pence a day. You can't call that too much."

Laughter again tickled Kadar's throat. This time it did not escape, but it was just sufficient to counterbalance the bitter answer that was on his lips. "No, it's very cheap. Thanks. I don't know yet whether I'll spend all

my time with my friends. . . .” Utterly hopeless to approach the old miser for a loan, and just as futile to ask Margit. Besides, she would go and tell her father. It didn’t matter now that he had no money, and it wouldn’t matter if he had to commit burglary or murder to get some. Nothing would matter.

In the evening, however, worry overwhelmed him. I must have money—but how? He considered the customers in the crowded restaurant. Maybe that fat Parkins, who invariably eats baked beans for his supper, could help me. Or the bearded, suspicious individual who is probably a Soviet agent. “I say, I know all about you!” That might frighten him into giving up money . . . or he might laugh or get angry. Good God! what a stupid, childish idea to try and find money in this place. I might plant myself in the middle of the room and shout: “Ladies and gentlemen, I must have twenty pounds, just for a week. I’ll pay it back” . . . or not . . . Lord, where can I get money?

By ten o’clock he was all in. Excitement and futile scheming had worn him to the point of exhaustion. He fled to his room, tore off his clothes, dropped into bed, and lay staring at the ceiling. Twenty pounds standing between this dog’s life and the future. I would go to the ends of the earth with that woman. Madam, I cannot live without you!—what rot! Madam, I cannot bear this misery any longer; take me away with you, as a footman, I don’t care. Yes, she might do it out of pity, or because I am from her country, or because she is rich and I might be of use to her. Oh, God, I cannot stand this filth and degradation. God, give me strength either to escape or kill myself, because I can stand it no longer.

Just after eleven the door opened gently—Mary. It

was the first time he had gone to bed first. She did not turn on the light, but whispered "Toni, are you asleep?"

He did not reply, but breathed loudly, evenly. He could hear her moving about in the dark. When she turned on the tap, the thin stream of water made a slight tinkling noise. Then the sound of splashing and washing. Mary gave a deep sigh. He half-opened his eyes—she stood naked by the wash bowl, drying herself with a towel. A wet corner of the towel slapped against something, her night-gown rustled, then the bed creaked under the weight of her body.

Kadar sat up suddenly. "Mary!"

"What is it, Toni? Aren't you asleep?"

"No . . . I say, Mary . . ." He jumped out of bed and sat down beside her. "Mary . . ." He must have been predestined to turn always to women in his distress, to regard them as mothers and confidantes, to look to them for solace and mercy and hope. Like a torrent his passionate words burst into the dark quiet.

"Mary . . . you know once I was a student—a gentleman. I wasn't born to be a slave in a rotten hole. I have dreams, ambitions. I want to create. I want to build houses, palaces—do you understand? I ought to go on and study. You know what drove me here, and now I have a chance to put things right. I could escape from this hell—but I have no money. Not a farthing, and I don't know what to do. If I miss this chance . . . I mustn't, I can't miss it." His head was on her breast and his frenzied, plaintive words were muffled in her rough nightgown, now wet with his tears. "I can't go on, Mary. I must get out. Do you see? . . . A servant's life! No—houses, palaces . . . do you see?"

With a sudden movement she pushed his head away

and sat up. There was a moment of tense silence. "Tell me, if you had money," she said finally, "are you sure? . . ."

"Yes," he cried hoarsely. "Absolutely sure."

Silence again. Her face was close to his. "Look here, Toni," he could just hear her faint whisper. "I have money—forty-seven pounds. Three years it's taken to save it. When I get old . . . but I have plenty of time. I wouldn't mind giving it to you . . . you won't give it back. No, you won't give it back. Jack never did. I gave him thirty-two pounds three years ago . . . you won't give it back either, but . . ."

The room seemed to be whirling; he was dizzy. Jack never gave it back. . . . I won't have to give it back either. God Almighty! He clutched Mary's shoulders to keep from collapsing. This girl . . . this servant was offering him her money. He remembered the dainty bits of food she had smuggled for him; her humble, grateful embraces. Now she was offering him money. What should he say? Refuse it? Jack never gave it back . . . and perhaps he wouldn't either. He felt her hard hands on his shoulders.

"See here, Toni, I don't mind. I'll give it to you. You're not like the old man or his daughter or me. I knew you'd leave sooner or later, and if I don't give you money you might get into a mess. I'll give you forty-five pounds, and some day when you are rich. . . ." Her hands were drawing his head nearer. . . . "When I saw you going off in your grey suit this morning, Toni, I knew that something was up." Her arms were tight around his neck; he could feel rather than hear her voice. "Toni, you can have my money, but be careful. You are only a child, and it's so hard to save. . . ."

Mary awoke at dawn and called him. They got up

quietly. She opened the wardrobe, fumbled under some clothing at the bottom—he could hear the thin click of a spring lock—then sitting on the bed they counted the one-pound notes. It was only six o'clock, but he was wide awake and too impatient to go back to bed. By seven he was out of the house. It was cold and rainy, but now cold and rain did not matter. He could feel the forty-five one-pound notes in his pocket. He would send her back these forty-five pounds some day. He would send her a hundred . . . one hundred pounds! He strode on towards the landing stage. Forty-five pounds!

Two boys sat beside him on the river steamer—two half-starved looking youngsters. "Are you going home, Jackie?" asked the taller. "Yes, the old man is never in this early, but I'll go home anyway." I'll go home. I ought to run back for my bag, drive to the station—the train leaves Victoria at eleven-twenty—for home! Madness. Go home now? Crazy! I'll telephone her to-day.

He strolled along Piccadilly, looking for a small boarding house. He could not stay at the Berkeley or the Ritz. That other one—the Langham Hotel—looked less expensive and was not very far from here. A bitter taste came into his mouth—Langham Hotel. He could go to the clerk and ask for the key to room 208. Certainly, Mr Kadar, room 208. He made a grimace and turned back.

In one of the side streets off Piccadilly he found Batt's Hotel, two minutes' walk from the Berkeley. He went in and asked the porter for an inexpensive room—eight-and-six a day, and clean and cheerful. In high spirits he took the bus back to London Bridge, the boat to Deptford, to Fodor's for his bag. A bus went by for Victoria Station. That's where my train starts—oh yes, if I were quite mad!

15

He unpacked his suitcase, took a bath, dressed, and went out for a stroll. After supper in a small restaurant he went home to bed. Fresh, fine linen sheets, soft mattress, polished Victorian furniture, hot and cold running water, Heaven!

Everything had been pleasantly settled with Fodor. The old man said very little. Mary, in the kitchen, turned her head away as he took her hand and said "God bless you."

And now he was lying in a soft bed in a good hotel. He must forget the last year, and think only of the present, of Mrs Hutton. Ilonka Sebess, she had been, from Kassa, Hungary. She was seventeen when she married the Englishman. How did they meet, and where, and why? I must find out all about her. She is four years older than I. Well, what of it? I don't want to marry her. I only want . . . well, what? I want to get a job in her South African office, to be an architect and build houses, palaces. Suddenly he was ashamed and turned off the light. God bless you, Mary . . . I am going to build houses, palaces . . . Good-bye, Paul. Good-bye, Tilly and Zia. . . .

He slept without dreaming. Habit woke him at six; he opened his eyes, smiled, and went off to sleep again. It was half-past nine when he went downstairs for breakfast. Someone had left a German newspaper on one of the tables: *Neue Freie Presse*: he reached for it. Headlines on the front page in heavy, black type: VERDICT IN ANARCHIST CASE. ALL DEFENDANTS SENTENCED TO LONG TERMS OF IMPRISONMENT.

He looked down the column and suddenly saw a name : Gerda Buhr. Gerda Buhr—eight years of penal servitude. Gerda Buhr ! Her blonde head seemed to float before his eyes, then something snapped in him like a broken machine. Finally, he began to read the story :

“ It is precisely ten months to-day since a bomb was thrown in the festival hall of the Ferdinand palace, causing the death of three people and crippling five for life. The bomb was not intended for the victims, but for certain prominent persons on the platform, including the President of the Republic, the Chancellor, the Ministers and other high government officials. At the crowded meeting, detectives noticed an excited man who tried to elbow his way along the gallery to get nearer the platform. A detective spoke to him ; the man pulled out from under his raincoat a cigar box, which he flung down into the hall. An explosion followed. The assassin was arrested, but not before he had made an unsuccessful attempt to shoot himself with a revolver. The man gave his name as Alois Hacek, a post-office clerk. He stubbornly refused any information about his confederates, but notes were found at his lodging, and the construction of the bomb was traced to a watchmaker named Koloman Feher. Further clues led to the arrest of an ex-artillery lieutenant, Norbert Ring ; and a woman, Gerda Buhr, described as an office worker, who was detained on the Swiss border while attempting to leave the country. At the end of the second week, Hacek’s nerve failed him, and he turned State’s witness.”

An account of the trial followed :

Public Prosecutor : Tell us, Hacek, how did you get to know Fräulein Buhr ?

Hacek : At the post office. She used to come in with

registered letters. Later she didn't bring any letters—just came.

Prosecutor: And did you find anything remarkable in this? Did you understand why she came to see you so often? Didn't it occur to you that she might be wanting something of you?

Hacek: Yes . . . I had an idea that she wanted something . . . but I thought she wanted something else. . . . —(Loud laughter)—Because she said that . . . she liked me . . .

Prosecutor: I see. Now tell us, Hacek, how did this friendship lead to your association with the anarchists?

Hacek: It was like this—I made a terrible mistake . . . I lost my head and fell in love with her.

Prosecutor: Now keep calm. Did this woman take advantage of your infatuation by persuading you to . . .

Hacek: Yes, she took advantage. She didn't even let me touch her hand . . . she knew I was crazy about her. I don't know how it happened that she took me to those people. She kept leading me on with promises. . . .

Prosecutor: Don't get excited. What about the conspiracy now?

Hacek: When they were planning the bomb-throwing, and discussing who should be the person to do it and no one volunteered, she leaned over to me and whispered . . .

Prosecutor: Whispered what?

Hacek: She said, "Volunteer and you will get all you want. Or else I will do it myself."

Prosecutor: What exactly did she mean when she promised that you would get all you wanted?

Hacek: To give herself to me! The same night when I promised to throw the bomb . . . she gave herself to me . . . on the sofa. The others left us alone on purpose.

I lost my senses and agreed to everything, and I made up my mind to shoot myself as soon as I had thrown it. The last time, the morning I threw it, she gave herself to me . . . I reported sick and didn't go to the office . . . that morning she lay down with me, and I couldn't resist.

Gerda Buhr (in a shrill voice) : It's a lie from beginning to end.

Prosecutor : Your honor, I beg to suggest that the trial continue *in camera*.

The paper dropped from Kadar's hand. Gerda Buhr—who used to stand beside his bed in the hospital like a saint, like a mother. She was so far away—and suddenly a cool peace came over him. If I had been interested in her talk about the world . . . if she hadn't pushed me away that night . . . if she had taken me in her arms and the next day talked about plots . . . she could have done with me what she did with Hacek. Now she is in prison. I don't suppose I care. I have ceased to care about so many things . . . most things.

The maid came to clear away the table, and he went out. She stuffed the answer to Gerda Buhr's enigma into the waste-paper basket.

He had ceased to care about many things, and now he had others to care about. Shall I telephone her? No, she must not think I am too anxious, too hungry, too free. Ilonka Sebens must not find out that she was the trump card on which he had staked his whole life, and Mary's forty-five pounds. Would he win? He must win, and this gamble, at least, was far more exciting than the wheel of fortune.

It would have been easier if there had been someone to talk to, yet he was afraid of being disturbed. He must

think out the right words, practical ideas, good arguments to help him. But he dreaded being alone for fear that loneliness would bring back memories of the past. He went for long walks in the crowded streets, looked at store windows—he would need this, he would have to buy that, if he were going to travel. He bought a map of South Africa, and spent the whole afternoon looking at it.

On the fourth day—now he would not appear too eager—he telephoned the Berkeley Hotel. Mrs Hutton was out. He would call again to-morrow. At a florist's he bought two great purple-blue orchids and sent them to her. Thirty shillings . . . well, what of it? It was a good investment. That afternoon, when he was poring again over the map, he was called to the telephone.

“Mr Kadar?”

“Mrs Hutton! How did you know where I am?”

“I know,” said Ilonka Sebens. “Isn't that enough? I'm very angry with you for sending the flowers, but thank you anyway. Are you free to-night? Good. I'll expect you here at seven.”

His evening clothes hung limp in the wardrobe, like a crumpled rag. He had no dress shirt—they are not worn with green aprons. Silence! No green aprons . . . there were never such things as green aprons. He rang the bell and sent the suit to be pressed, then ran out to a shop. Nervously he snatched a parcel—two stiff shirts, half-a-dozen evening collars, a black tie, black socks, a pair of unbelievably expensive white gloves.

She received him in the sittingroom. The table was laid—gleaming with glass and silver—for two.

“Ah, you've dressed,” she said, as he came in. “I meant to ask you not to, for there will only be the two of us and we're not going out. I'm still cross with you

about the flowers, you silly boy. That piece of politeness must have cost you two pounds at least, and you can't afford it."

His face flamed red, and he tried to protest with a casual wave of his hand; but she went on:

"Don't deny it. Let's not pretend. I've found out all about you, and a poor boy like you shouldn't have such expensive tastes. But don't be offended or we won't ever get anywhere. Anyway it's nothing to be ashamed of. I wasn't born a princess either." She said it so sweetly and naturally that it would have been foolish not to laugh, and still more foolish to go on pretending.

"So you know all about me?" he asked lightly, and wondered, trembling inwardly: does she know about Toth also?

"Yes—at least all I want to know."

So she had taken the trouble to enquire. "And how did you find out?"

"Guess. How about the Aliens Department—or Sherlock Holmes?" She laughed.

As he sat facing her at the table he kept thinking: she is about twenty-eight, four years older than I . . . Her manner took away all his shyness. She talked easily of Sydney, of South Africa, of her travels—and, finally, of herself. . . . I wasn't born a princess . . . Her parents died when she was fourteen, and she went to live with an old uncle. She had to leave school and work as typist in a lawyer's office, and her first love was a fair-haired clerk . . . Then the town contracted with a British firm for the construction of new water-works. Her lawyer was the legal adviser. The British firm sent Mr Hutton to superintend the work, and he met Ilonka at the office. He learned a few words of Hungarian and kept repeating

them over and over—what a pretty girl you are. When he left, he said: "I want you to learn English." Honka blushed—and went to night school.

A letter came from London, and another, and another, until one day Hutton appeared again in Kassa. Two weeks later the night express carried away Mr and Mrs Hutton.

She has come a long way from a village, too, and now I am going on with her. Take care! This time you're not asking for shillings. Careful, don't be greedy, don't give yourself away.

She talked of South Africa, of Port Elizabeth—a city as warm as Naples and as clean as Amsterdam. New buildings went up every week, rich Dutchmen and Germans and Englishmen trying to outdo each other in magnificence. Abbott, Hutton & Abbott took their share, of course.

Kadar's head throbbed. He waited for a word, but the word was not spoken. He must say it, he must cry out: Take me with you! But the words stuck in his throat. It was getting late—and nothing had happened, nothing had been said. The agony of a lost cause cut him like swords. At last he looked at his watch and stood up.

"What are you going to do now?" she asked.

"Now?"

"I mean, what are your plans? Are you going to stay in London?"

He tried to look unconcerned, but his eyes wavered. "I don't know yet." He did manage a casual tone. "I may stay here, or perhaps. . . ."

"Tell me, don't you want me to ask Scott to give you a job in the office?"

It was the last chance. If he went on play-acting he

might miss it. Yes, please. Ask him for a job in the office. A piece of bread without the green apron. But gambler's madness held him. He forced a smile to his lips.

"It's awfully good of you, but please don't bother. I don't think I could get permission to work here. And, even if I could, it wouldn't be a good idea, because . . ." He looked into her eyes.

Her color turned a shade deeper. "And if I were to say . . ."

Suddenly he knew that he had won. With the steady look of a successful gambler, he held her eyes. It was not things that mattered now, it was persons. A long-forgotten, impertinent, boyish voice said within him: Take her now. She wants you to! His shoulders and arms felt the impulse.

She looked away from him and stood up. "How did you know what I was going to say?"

"You were going to say: 'If I should offer to take you with me.'"

His voice was hard.

"Suppose I did ask you . . . I only . . . I can't decide so quickly."

"Oh," he was completely sure of himself, "I didn't mean to be obtrusive. I only meant that if you were to ask me I would go with you to South Africa . . . anywhere."

As his eyes followed her fugitive, uncertain look, as her slight figure turned abruptly away, he knew that he could go home and pack his luggage. She would take him with her to South Africa . . . anywhere.

17

The fireproof document cabinet had a special drawer where Mr T. A. Cadar kept his private papers—news-paper clippings, correspondence, notes. Sometimes in a quiet hour Antal Kadar re-arranged, toyed with Mr T. A. Cadar's papers.

First-Class Passenger List of the Union Castle Mail S.S. Falconia, from Southampton, October 8, 1922, to Port Elizabeth and Durban. Mrs Helena M. Hutton—166. Mr A. Kadar—165.

Mrs Hutton's letter from Cape Town: . . . Hewlett wrote me that, since I left Port Elizabeth, you are spending all your time at the office. I am glad you are interested, but don't work too hard. I have an idea that Hewlett is jealous of you. Don't let it worry you, however. Garnett thinks we stand a good chance of getting the contract for the new Library building. I'll be back as soon as it is settled. . . .

An article in a sports paper: The result of the mixed doubles match—The Kadar-Hutton team won easily, 6:2, 6:0, over the Dunn-Dunn team, winners of last year's tournament. The perfect co-ordination of the winners' playing was remarkable.

A visiting card: Mr A. Kadar, Manager, Messrs Abbott, Hutton & Abbott.

Mr Hewlett's letter to Mrs Hutton: I am sincerely glad that a young, able person, one who seems to enjoy your full confidence, has been installed here. At the same time, I feel it is my duty, after the years I have spent in the firm's service, to point out something. The speculation with the Kruegersdorp sites caused me sleep-

less nights. It is true that it ended successfully, but I must remind you that this hazardous policy is contrary to the principles of the firm, and I cannot stand by if such speculations are to be continued. I am taking the liberty of asking you to use your influence should occasion arise. . . .

Copy of Mr Hewlett's letter to the London head office : . . . I feel that I deserve consideration if I ask, after nine years of service abroad, to be transferred to London. If this is not possible, I should much regret having to tender my resignation.

Mr G. Abbott's telegram to Mrs Hutton: Arriving seventh please be port elizabeth must see kadar—abbott.

Receipt of Money Order: Mary Tate, c/o Fodor, 71 Steelworks Row, Deptford, London. £100, A. Kadar, Port Elizabeth.

Mr Garnett's telegram from Johannesburg: Kadar please come immediately secured warehouse contract congratulations—garnett.

A document: . . . certificate of naturalization has been granted to Mr Theodore Anthony Cadar. . . .

Advertisement: I hereby announce that I have discontinued the use of my surname Kadar, and that I shall on all further occasions and for all purposes exclusively use my surname Cadar. . . .

A clipping: Mr T. A. Cadar and Mrs Helena Hutton were married yesterday at. . . .

A document: The registrar of business names noted the change of title of Abbott, Hutton & Abbott, to Abbott, Hutton, Abbott & Cadar. . . .

Copy of Mr T. A. Cadar's letter to London: . . . all said and done, I am so sure of the chances of this venture that, if you are not willing to give your consent to the firm's

participation, I shall carry it through on my own. The site is bound to increase considerably in value. . . .

A legal document: . . . to wit the area now owned by the Municipality and bordered by the present boundary of the City and by the present boundary of the suburb of Olchester and by the seashore of Algoa Bay and by a straight line measuring two and one-half statute miles as indicated in the attached plan, to be purchased as a freehold of the said Theodore Anthony Cadar of this City. . . .

A coloured poster: ADAM'S GARDEN OF EDEN WAS IN ASIA. THE MODERN GARDEN OF EDEN IS IN SOUTH AFRICA. ASK FOR PROSPECTUS.

Telegram from Corbett, Real Estate Agent: Eighty to thirtyfour sold reserve fifty more—smith.

Telegram from Corbett, Real Estate Agent: Eighty to hundredfive sold wire whether you can reserve ten in wooded section—corbett.

An official letter: . . . the Government will be represented by persons to be named hereafter, at the official inauguration of Helena Village and its charitable institutions. . . .

18

Then—that was over too. The opening of the colony. Hurrah for Helena Village! The government delegation . . . celebration . . . banquet . . . speeches. They went home at last, and sat smoking a cigarette on the verandah that overlooked the ocean.

“I’m tired,” he said. “Shall we go to bed?”

“All right.” Then after a moment’s silence; “I was

hoping that we would have a glass of champagne, just the two of us."

"Of course," he answered vaguely. "Are you thirsty?"

"Not exactly . . . but I thought . . . you must have forgotten."

"Forgive me, darling. I'm a frightful brute. But this uproar all day long . . ." He brought the champagne and two glasses. The loosened cork flew into the deep, blue night. It was the sixth anniversary of their wedding. They drank each other's health, emptied the glasses, kissed, and went to bed.

19

Every day a stone was added to the wall that came between Anthony Cadar of the present and Antal Kadar of the past. He did not build it; the wall rose of its own accord. He stood by and let things happen. For the last ten years he had stood by. Sometimes he thought: I should like . . . Sometimes, I must . . . But the real forces in his life had always come from the outside; a rubber truncheon sent him to Vienna; an illness brought him to Paul and indirectly to London; a woman's kiss sent him to Deptford, and a woman's susceptibility to South Africa.

The wall was already very high. It shut out his old friends and the things of the past; the sound of old music. On this side of the wall life was so different. No—on this side life was life. Beyond the wall? Who cared what happened there?

The business grew with contract after contract, and his bank balance increased with it. His wife was an intimate part of it all—of his passion and his work and his amusements. She was clever about building and plans—and she left him alone when he was tired or when he wanted to get away. They were continually surrounded by people: English and Germans and Dutch, clients, friends, acquaintances. Yet their life was quiet, peaceful.

In his office was a large map of the world. Sometimes he stood and looked at it. There was London—they had spent a month in London after their marriage. Vienna. Budapest—it was six years since he last heard from Budapest. Two years after he came to South Africa, he wrote a letter to two dim shadows: Dear Aunt Anna and Uncle Rudi, I know it is very cruel and ungrateful of me . . . Four months later the letter was returned, scribbled all over with addresses, and stamped: Removed—removed. Finally, under the last address: Deceased. The postal authorities had done their job conscientiously. He stared at the envelope coolly, impersonally. He might, perhaps, have thought himself a good man if tears had come to his eyes—or, perhaps, he might have considered himself a good actor. And because sentiment was now more precious than money, he sent a request to the Budapest police, asking for information about Rudolf Bayer, ex-inspector of State Railroads, and his wife. The reply came: He had died of cancer eighteen months ago; his widow left Budapest soon after the funeral, accompanied by a young woman, her destination—according to the housekeeper—Italy. Address unknown.

Young woman—Italy? That must be Mariska. It was decent of her. Had she married the Italian?

He threw the letter into a drawer. The last thread

was broken. It is better so. I am still young; my whole life is before me. What is the use of remembering? It is so easy to forget faces, meaningless names, faint voices—everything that belongs to the past. If I don't think of them, then it is certain that they never even existed.

III

THE ARENA

1

THIRTY-SEVEN letters in the mail—one of them from Budapest. Who would write him from Budapest? It was addressed to T. A. Cadar, not Kadar. Who in Budapest could have known that he had changed the spelling of his name? He tore open the envelope: Dear Kadar: Merry Christmas from a small group of your old classmates. . . . How amusing. Where did they find out? He turned over the page and looked at the signature—Andi Kelemen? Of course, the dark-haired boy on the fourth or fifth bench. And the others—Weiss, yes, the small, red-faced Jewish boy. Katona, he was thin and very quiet. Simon—Simon? He was not quite sure. He read the letter again, and Kelemen's postscript, then laid it aside and went over the rest of the mail. At noon his wife came in.

"Look, my dear—a funny letter from Budapest." He did not notice that he spoke in Hungarian. "Read it. It's from some old school friends."

"How droll—and really charming." No more was said about it, until a few days later she asked: "Have you written to Budapest?"

"No, not yet." He, too, had thought once or twice that he ought to answer the note, but days went by and he never seemed to get it done.

They were planning a trip to London in March; May could be spent in Paris; June, July, and August in Switzerland and Norway. Six months away—but why not? Garnett could supervise the building of the new grand-stand at the Johannesburg race-course. Kruegersdorp would be finished by the end of January—these were his wife's arguments whenever he was doubtful. She was the one who wanted rest, change, recreation. "While we're away, not a word about business," she begged. "I want to be alone with you all the time—just the two of us." That was the real reason for going, he knew—the two of us alone, on the ship, in new countries, new cities. A fine, rich life, the two of us alone.

"What about it?" he said suddenly one day. "Suppose we spend a few days in Budapest after Paris? A week or two, perhaps."

Her voice was a little doubtful. "Is that letter still on your mind? There isn't a soul you care for in Budapest, is there? Or are you getting sentimental?"

"I don't know . . . but it doesn't matter. It's not people, of course. It's the place. I lived there most of my life." He stopped, and she felt a mild reproach behind his silence.

"Toni, you know I want to go wherever you like. To Budapest if you say so . . . I've never been in Budapest."

I've never been in Budapest—he had heard a woman say that before. His mother, when they talked of sending him there to school. Suddenly he wanted to talk of Budapest—of the Budapest of twenty years ago, when he first saw the mysterious, enormous, terrifying city, full of serious, strange men, his schoolmasters; of the iron bed in Aunt Anna's apartment; of his tears when his father left him alone; of the first electric streetcar, the

first automobile he ever saw. Then he remembered her word "sentimental," and said nothing.

"You know, when I was a little girl I would have given my soul to go to Budapest. I would have run away if Hutton . . . and then I saw so many countries and cities, but never Budapest. It must be quite different now."

A warm breath of air came to the terrace—wind from the Indian Ocean. "Yes," he said, "it must be quite different now."

2

He sat at the typewriter. On the notepaper was engraved: Abbott, Hutton, Abbott & Cadar, London, Port Elizabeth, Sydney.

Dear Kelemen: I was very pleased to hear from you. Of course I remember all of you. I could not begin to tell you all the things that have happened since I saw you last, but it is quite possible that we will visit Budapest next spring, and then we can have a long talk. Give my best regards to all the others. Very sincerely, Antal Kadar.

"And if we don't go to Budapest?" asked his wife, when she read the letter.

"It won't matter. I've not promised anything."

3

Kati, the servant-girl, stood at the kitchen door, wiping her hands on her apron as Kelemen reached home. "There is a letter for you, sir. It looks very important. The postman didn't want to leave it. He said he didn't

want to give it to anyone but you, but I told him it was all right. I stuck it between your red books."

His face turned pale with excitement. He rushed to his room, to the bookshelf, and snatched the letter with the South African stamp from between the Modern Hungarian and Foreign Writers. His hands trembled. God! The answer from Kadar.

About the end of November last year he had posted that letter, and to-day was the sixteenth of February. Nearly three months had gone by since then—and what a three months! T. A. Cadar—the name had become an obsession with him, and there were times when he imagined South Africa as a fairyland, and himself as a nabob—as Toni Kadar's friend and right-hand man. But there were nights when such ideas were shattered—horrible nights when he could not think of any possible way of reaching Kadar. Why should he come to Budapest? What, in God's name, would he be doing here? I'm crazy if I think that letter appealed to his vanity.

Rot! He knows it's rot, and we're a lot of bluffers. We may fool ourselves, but not him, even if he is Hungarian. He wouldn't care a damn whether his old friends were impressed with his success or not, whether we envied or admired him. Why should he care? Why should he leave South African sunshine for Budapest? Dreadful nights. Kadar and South Africa were the last cards he had to play.

The winter had been bad—no one ever talked of anything important or interesting—only of dull, little, soul-grinding things. Christmas was horrible—no bonus at the office, and no one dared to grumble. Things were very bad. New Year brought an extra eighty pengö, damn them. His sister Joli begged for ten; he gave ten

to his mother; twenty-four went for champagne with the boys—that was a crime—for eighteen he bought a box of a hundred Muratti cigarettes; and the rest vanished on movies, cafés.

Seventeen men were fired in January. God knew why he wasn't one of them. However, the letter to Cadar was not returned, and the best thing was to forget all about it. So he could go on hoping and amusing himself with the possibilities of the Cadar business, while he bent over his collection lists.

He found out from the post-office how long it took for a letter to reach Port Elizabeth, and worked out the earliest possible time for an answer to reach him. Last year he had never gone home after lunch—he would drop in at Sari's or look over a newspaper for half an hour in a café. But for the last four weeks he had run home at noon to see if there was a letter for him. Occasionally there was something: circulars, bills. But on the whole it was pleasant enough to look forward to the answer. And now, when he was not expecting it, there it was in his hand, Kadar's typewritten lines: It is quite possible that we will visit Budapest next spring . . . more than he had expected. God! I know I'm no genius, I'm a good-for-nothing, but I can smell a scent if there is one to smell.

4

I won't tell the boys for a while. There's plenty of time—perhaps Thursday night at the café. Spring is from the twenty-first of March to the twenty-first of June. He must have business in Europe. He would not come all the way to Budapest just for a vacation. I'll ask for

leave—I have three weeks coming to me, and if Bloch has a fit, I'll take it anyway. If I can't do anything else I'll get a doctor's certificate: Overwrought nerves, due to excessive mental strain . . . complete rest for at least three weeks.

Next spring . . . I'll have to find an hotel for them—the Ritz. Of course, they couldn't find the Ritz without me! If they come in May they might stay at the Gellert, or on the Island. That can be settled later. We will visit Budapest . . . that means his wife is coming with him. All right. I'll have to find someone presentable for her—maybe Amman knows somebody big and good-looking at the Ministry. Rot! How do I know what sort she likes? I won't worry about that. She'll pick up somebody at the swimming pool anyway before I get a chance to introduce. . . .

I can find a girl for him easily enough—maybe the director's girl. I shouldn't mind having her myself . . . that's beside the point. The main thing is that the ball has started rolling. How shall I keep them amused: National Museum, Exposition of Applied Art? Rubbish! How do I know what interests them? Cabarets and American bars certainly. What if she doesn't speak Hungarian? There are always plenty of English movies. I could show him the new water-tower of the Workmen's Insurance building . . . or would he think it was funny? I needn't worry now. Things will work out.

And then my business. First I'll ask him about things in general down there, as if I were just being polite. "Unbelievable, old man, the progress and opportunities down there . . ." And then at the right moment: "You see, things are different here. In the first place a man with talent has absolutely no chance to do anything about

it. The whole system is rotten—the biggest fools get the fattest jobs. And, in the second place, poverty, stagnation. New business can't be started. If I tried to sell a pair of shoelaces on a street corner, I couldn't find a customer. Do you know out there the meaning of the expression *finished*? Well everybody here is finished. The only people who can earn a living nowadays are the crooks and the profiteers . . . What about myself? Well, I make a living because ability may be suppressed, but it can't be squashed entirely. Things would be different if I didn't have to waste my energies on small details, if I had an intelligent staff under me . . .” God! I am an idiot. How can I talk to him like that? What makes me think he won't see through it all? Wouldn't it be better if I simply said: “Look here, Kadar, you are a big man; I am a little one. Which of us has more brains I can't judge, but you certainly have had more luck. But two pairs of eyes see more than one. I could help you . . . and so forth . . . You can judge for yourself that I have brains, that I can work . . .” How would he know that I can work? Can I work? Or what if I told him: “Kadar, old fellow, for God's sake take me with you and let me carry bricks, mix mortar, be your secretary or your footman or anything, but take me away with you. I can't stand this hopeless existence any longer.” Am I crazy? He would laugh at me. . . . Well, if I said: “Listen, Kadar, I, Andor Kelemen, had the idea of getting you to come here to this ragged, ruined place, full of greedy people. At school I thought you were a fool, and I still think so. But you are a lucky fool. I looked forward to your coming with definite, selfish intentions, and so did everybody else who knew about it. But that shouldn't surprise you. Re-

member how we used to envy Vidor for his eternally clean collars? Whenever we had a chance we dirtied them. We envied you because you were supposed to be the stupidest in the class, and so you were always asked the easiest questions . . . And now, Kadar, we want your money, and no means is too good or too bad for us to use in order to get it. I, for one, made up my mind to dazzle you with jazz music and champagne and a pretty girl. Do you understand my scheme? Do you realize that I was shaping your plans without asking you? No, you can't, because you are stupid and have forgotten our methods. We are just a band of small brigands—your dear old schoolmates. But I won't be too hard on you. I will protect you from the others—if you will just put down on this table one hundred thousand—what is it to you? No more than a box of Turkish cigarettes to me." Good God! what a lot of mad rubbish! I must try to sleep. Say the alphabet backwards, or else I'll really have a nervous breakdown, and won't need a doctor's certificate. . . .

5

It was past eleven o'clock when Kelemen entered the café. He sat down, and, at the first lull in the noise, said in an off-hand manner: "I say, I've got an answer from Kadar."

Every head turned towards him. He took the letter from his pocket and threw it unconcernedly on the table. Rona picked it up.

"Why does he write to you? We all signed the letter to him."

"He wrote to me," said Kelemen loftily, "because, if

you will remember, we agreed that I should put my name and address on the envelope."

"Hell! you needn't get mad. I didn't mean anything."

"Let's see the envelope," said Simon. "Have you got it?"

Kelemen put his hand in his pocket. "Do you think I wrote this letter? Do you suppose I had one sheet of notepaper printed specially in order to fool you?"

"What's the matter with you, Kelemen?" said Simon, as he took the envelope. "Don't be so touchy. It's all right—thirty-four days in getting here."

The letter went round and the envelope followed. When it reached Kempner he eyed it, turned it about, and asked: "Could I have the stamp, Kelemen? My boy collects them, and I don't think he has this one." Without waiting for an answer, he took his pocket knife, opened the little nail scissors, and cut the stamp slowly and neatly out of the corner of the envelope. Kempner was a teacher, and his six-year-old son was the first person to profit by Kadar.

Nemes, his wild eyes gleaming behind his glasses, handed back the envelope. "I say, Kelemen, have you written to him separately?"

Kelemen's face turned crimson. "What do you mean? Why should I have written separately?"

"Come, come!" Nemes was in a malicious mood, and drawled his words. "You are nervy. I didn't want to know whether you asked him for anything. I only said, have you written separately. But if you tell us . . ."

"Fool!" shouted little Weiss, always on Kelemen's side.

Marton tried to light the end of his cold cigar. "Well,

anyway," he said, between puffs, "he says he may come to Budapest. That's nice, but it's not very definite."

"Who asked him to come?" put in Kalotay. "But if he does come, I can tell you I won't get down on my knees to him."

"God forbid!" exclaimed big Weiss. "You've not got the figure for it. But I'd be willing to bet that if he does come you'll make him a welcome speech."

"In which case," snapped the other, "it would be better than you could do."

"Peace, gentlemen, peace!" cried Katona. "We've plenty of time to quarrel before he gets here. Have you heard about Vidor's wedding?"

"Vidor married? To a shopworn duchess, I'll wager!" The whole company exploded into laughter.

"On the contrary—to the youngest daughter of Baron Strauss. You know what a sight she is, but her father was willing to give two millions to a suitable young man. Vidor had to join the Jewish Church, but the Baron didn't insist on circumcision."

At midnight Rona stood up, yawned, and turned to Kelemen. "Good-night. I'll see you again in March. But if you hear from Kadar, let me know."

The others began to put on their overcoats, and suddenly everyone had something to say about Kadar. It would be a good idea to write him again. If further news came from him—if he turned up unexpectedly. . . .

Simon went with Kelemen towards home. They walked in silence for a while, then: "I say, Kelemen, don't you think we could make something by him?"

"Who?" said Kelemen, though he knew well enough. His heart beat nervously.

"Kadar—if he really comes."

Careful. Look out for Simon. Simon had always been strange, always up to tricks, and no one knew now exactly on what he lived. He was said to be a reporter for some theatrical and movie papers. His clothes were well-made, he went to expensive night clubs, rode in taxis, and acted as if he had money. Probably he gambled. Careful.

"I don't see what you mean. What could we get out of him?"

"Well . . . get him to do something?"

"But do what?"

"Look here, don't act like an idiot. Get him into business of some sort. I don't know yet what kind—something where he won't necessarily lose money, but something we could make a profit on. It's early—come and have a drink with me at the Casino."

6

Albert Kalotay, lawyer, stood up from his desk and began to rub his pince-nez carefully with a lavender silk handkerchief. "No," he said to the person sitting in the armchair across from him. "There's nothing more I can do. The loan was granted to your client for eighteen months. The note has already been renewed three times, and in these days, with money so tight . . ."

"All right," said the other. "But don't forget how much those renewals cost. After all, if you consider that my client is paying interest representing nearly eighteen per cent. of the mortgage loan of sixty thousand pengö on a property that is worth at least two hundred thousand. . . ."

"I know, I know, but what can I do? Maybe your client's bank will take over the mortgage."

"But you know how difficult it is to deal with banks when the property is a private house with almost no rented apartments."

"That's the trouble, of course. There is no revenue from the house, and if—God forbid!—his business fails, there will be no money to pay even the interest."

"Exactly. And if you insist on immediate payment of the note, the withdrawal of sixty thousand from the working capital of his business would ruin him."

"That, I am sorry to say, is something we can't take into consideration," said Kalotay firmly.

"And what will happen if he can't pay on the fifth of May?"

"Then, unfortunately, we shall have to foreclose, unless . . ."

The other drew a deep breath. This *unless* would cost money to be sure—an expensive straw for a drowning client to clutch. "Well?"

"I was just thinking that a friend of mine, a world-famous architect, and incidentally a very wealthy man, may arrive in Budapest soon. It's just possible that I could persuade him to grant your client a long loan . . . or he might buy the property . . . at a reasonable price, of course. And then you and I could split the commission."

"And you really think . . ."

"My dear fellow, it's only an idea. He may not find the proposition attractive. I don't even know exactly when he is coming. He merely wrote me: I may be coming this spring. You musn't put too much hope on him."

The other rose. "I can only ask you to do all you can. There's no point in your ruining an old-established factory, just because times are bad. One way or another. . . ."

"No," Albert Kalotay laughed. "There is no other way. Leave it to me. I will do my best. You can be sure that I shouldn't be sorry to make something out of this wretched business."

7

"Much obliged, Inspector," said Simon. "It would be fine if you could. . . ."

"Not at all. As I said, they don't know anything about him in the criminal department, and there is no reference to him in connection with the Bolshevik investigations. According to the passport office, a passport was issued to him in October 1919, and no re-entry is recorded since then. Rudolf Bayer, the uncle he stayed with in Budapest, died years ago. I am quite sure nothing else can be found out about him here. But if you like I could ask Vitorescu at the Roumanian Legation to have his family traced at—where did you say—yes, Torda. It won't cost you any money. Just tell me exactly what you want to know."

"I'd like to find out as much about him as possible, and about his family—who they are and what they are doing and so on."

"I see, general report as to person and character. You shall have it. Ring me up in a week or two. It will take a little time."

"Splendid. And thanks very much. By the way,

about those cabaret tickets, what night do you want them for?"

"Oh, yes, the tickets. . . . Any night—say, Saturday?"

"Right. I'll send them. Good-bye, Inspector. Thanks again."

8

Big Weiss put on his hat at the door, but he did not leave. He turned and walked back into the room, his hat still on his head. A yellow-haired woman stood by the window and looked at him sullenly.

"You are very much mistaken, madam," he said, "if you think you can rent your apartment by taking it off my list. You stand a much better chance if you let me keep working on it. But you've got to reduce the rent. Who do you think will pay five thousand for five rooms on the third floor of an old-fashioned house without an elevator? Nobody, I assure you, not even if your rooms were as big as dance-halls and looked out on the Bay of Naples. I'm looking for an apartment for a client of mine now—a rich architect from abroad who is coming to Budapest and wants me to find a place for him. There's a villa in Buda, four rooms, verandah, big windows, servants' bathroom—absolutely everything—and it's been empty for nearly two years. Do you know what the landlord said? He said, Weiss, rent it as it stands for four thousand. I'll take three if I have to, and twenty per cent. is yours. . . . I've been thinking that the villa might just suit my friend. A thousand more or less doesn't matter to him. Well, think it over, madam."

"Tell me, Mr Weiss," the woman's voice was undecided, "don't you think we might not need to reduce the

rent until that gentleman from abroad . . . couldn't you show him my apartment? It is in a much more central position than a villa in Buda."

"Well, if I can't rent it before, there would be no harm in showing it to him. You can't tell. . . ."

9

Amman rested his head in his hands and listened to Salgo, who sat looking at the floor.

"No, it's no use," Salgo drawled painfully. "I'm not complaining, I'm simply telling you facts. You did your best for me, but it was no use. Some higher powers were working against me. I couldn't even get that nasty little job at the hospital. It isn't even bread—just bread-crumbs."

"Rotten luck," said Amman quietly. "I'm awfully sorry. What about your private practice?"

"Private practice!" Salgo looked up reproachfully. "You know very well that doesn't even pay my rent. I tell you, Amman, it's not a question of bad times in general or the misery of the whole medical profession. This is my own personal trouble. What's at the bottom of it all? Favouritism and reputation. I'm certainly nobody's favourite . . . and my reputation—I must say I've got a reputation. My name was good enough to be dragged into the mud by every Jew paper for years. I ran across Steiner the other day. Remember him? They kicked him out of the University here, so he studied at Prague, and now he's manager of the Philacto works in Budapest—the lousy Jew. . . . I'm glad I haven't a family

to support. If they advertise again for doctors for the Dutch East Indies or for the bottom of hell. . . .”

Amman shook his head in sympathy and swallowed a yawn. “Sorry. I only had a few hours’ sleep last night—conference that went on forever. It’s a terrible mixup, Salgo, and I hate to say it, but I do think the only solution for you is to emigrate.” He stretched himself in his chair. “Look here, I’ve an idea. You know Toni Kadar is coming to Budapest—you’ve heard what a lot of money he made in South Africa. I can’t promise to approach him—I tell you frankly I’ll be trying to work him in connection with an export idea of mine—but they need doctors in South Africa. . . . Naturally, this is just between you and me. . . .”

10

Laci Rona leaned back in his chair, stretched his legs underneath the dining-table and stuck a toothpick in his mouth.

“I say, Dad, I meant to tell you something. Do you remember Kadar? I went to school with him.”

“Kadar,” said the old man vaguely. “Which one was he?”

“That short, fat boy who used to come here to play ping-pong?” ventured Mama Rona. “Of course, I remember him.”

“No, Mama, Kadar was not short and fat. He was tall and thin, and he didn’t come here much.”

“Then I don’t remember him. What about him?”

“Well, this Kadar somehow got to South Africa and made a tremendous fortune there.”

"How do you know?" asked old Rona.

"I know what I'm talking about. And this Kadar is coming to Budapest."

"Is he married?" asked Mama Rona, suddenly interested.

"He is." Young Rona grinned. "Why do you want to know? Flora has one husband. Who do you want to marry him to?"

"Yes, she's married," old Rona sighed. "And her husband has cost me enough money already."

"Adolf, don't talk like that," the old lady cried. "I won't have it." She turned to her son. "Did you say he is married, Laci? What a pity! I was thinking of Blanka Roth's daughter. . . ."

"No, Mama," young Rona laughed. "Toni Kadar is married and so he is not eligible for the time being, unless you could persuade him to get a divorce, and then he would be the most eligible man in Budapest."

"Does he have business here?"

"No, pleasure trip. He's coming to feast his eyes on the way Budapest has gone to ruin while he was stacking up money in South Africa."

The old man—he had retired from business years ago—began to stroke his little pointed grey beard, which was an outward sign of commercial thoughts. "Laci, I've an idea. If your friend is really a rich man, couldn't you get him to buy that twenty-four piece set of Herend china we had left on our hands when Count Stambach went smash? If he has a lot of money. . . ."

Laci Rona withdrew the toothpick, broke it between his fingers and threw it on the tablecloth. "So you think he's coming to Budapest to buy china? . . . But it's not a bad idea. Anyway I could try."

11

"Madmozel Lya!" called the head waiter.

Lya Milton, soloist at the top of the program, an emaciated platinum blonde, pressed her cigarette into the plate on the table, and stood up dutifully.

"What is it, Jules?"

"Madmozel Lya is wanted at right-two," and then leaning nearer, he added in a whisper, "rich old boy from the country. Pretty drunk already."

"*One moment . . . at once,*" said Miss Lya in English, loudly, and with an excellent Hungarian pronunciation. "I'm coming." She took out her powder box and turned to the other girls. ". . . And Pali Simon told me that this friend of his owns a whole city with eight thousand, or I don't know how many, houses, and he has a tremendous lot of cash. Pali Simon says he will introduce me to him and he can leave the rest to me. . . . You needn't laugh, Irma. You'll see." And she went smiling and mincing towards right-two.

12

Marton was surrounded by a group of men in the smokingroom of the Liberal Club. He was not yet a member of the City Council, but he was sure to be nominated at the next election. He had a pleasant, sonorous baritone voice:

". . . I grant it, gentlemen, a prophet is not without honor . . . It is a typical Hungarian fault that we are reluctant to acknowledge talent even if by chance we

recognize it. I am reminded of this by a friend, an old schoolmate of mine, who left this country years ago, cast off and despised, with nothing in his pack but his talents and his undaunted resolution. And now, after many years, at the . . . at the zenith of his career, he writes me: I am longing for my mother-country, for my own language, for my old friends. I have no grudge. If I come back, will you receive me kindly? Who among you, gentlemen, knows the name of Kadar? But pronounce the name in any metropolis of Europe, America, or Africa, and hundreds and hundreds will instantly tell you: He is the famous Hungarian architect. And if, in view of this, we are unable to retain such a man for the benefit of our public life, and indirectly for the benefit of every member of our public, then, gentlemen, we do not deserve . . .”

13

Thus Antal Kadar, because of a picture torn from a magazine on the table in a dentist's office, became a legendary figure. His fame was broadcast from a coffee-house table, and reached the ears of a greedy horde. First a dozen people heard of him, then another dozen . . . “but please don't mention it. It's not certain yet, and there's no point in spreading the news . . .” Then another dozen, and another. Ears opened, eyes stared, palms began to itch.

The arena grew with the spring, was swept clean of everyday trifles, was spread over with the sand of a golden idea. Before mirrors in stuffy little houses, pica-dors dressed themselves in bright hopes. Every one of them trained his strength to carry off the biggest share

of the booty. Imaginations burned with the lust of gold, mouths watered for the feast, cocked guns were aimed at the quarry. Professionals and amateurs, rich and poor, high and low, lay in wait under the spring sky. Now . . . do you hear something?

Kadar sat, meanwhile, in the London office, writing on his portable typewriter:

Dear Kelemen: As I wrote you before, we are hoping to visit Budapest towards the end of May or early in June. My wife and I are going first to Paris, and I will wire you the date of our arrival from there. Could you, without too much trouble, reserve two rooms and bath for us at the Ritz? Best wishes, Kadar.

14

It was fortunate that the letter came a few days after the meeting in April. Kelemen made up his mind not to tell the others until the next meeting in May. No use talking too much about this business. Simon's vague suggestion worried him. I'm not the only one who wants something from Kadar. I've got to keep it under my hat.

One day, when he met Vavrinetz in the street, he had a shock.

"I hear," said Vavrinetz, "that Kadar is coming back."

"Yes," Kelemen was surly, "there's some talk of it, but it isn't certain. Who told you?"

"Strangely enough, not one of our crowd. My father heard it from Amman's brother-in-law. Funny to get news in such a roundabout way."

So the story has gone round? I'll keep quiet for a while. He wrote to Kadar: I'm glad you are coming. Of course, I will arrange for the rooms.

And now it was easier to live through the abominable spring. Kelemen was living two lives: one unendurably slow, eventless, outward life at the office, in the restaurant, at cafés, at home; another exciting life that began at night when he turned off the light and lay staring into the darkness, thinking of Kadar and South Africa, with the certainty and tenacity of an obsession. He would succeed! Sometimes his cynical Budapest self warned him: You're crazy! As if it all depended on you! Then the thought of all the years of craving for money, for comfort, for security, rose and set him dreaming again. With the disembodied, ecstatic smile of a maniac he kept repeating: I will succeed. This will come off. My luck has turned. It began when I discovered Kadar's picture. I wasn't fired in January; the letter came after the meeting so that I didn't have to mention it to anybody; and I'll have my holiday.

He got a doctor's certificate—not from Salgo or Bergmann—they needn't know I'm taking a vacation—but from Otto Arany, a young doctor who ran around with Joli. He would do a favour for Joli's brother. As a matter of form he came to see Kelemen one evening, had him strip to the waist, examined his eyelids, his heart, gave him a sharp rap on the knee. Then he wrote a certificate saying that Andor Kelemen was suffering from a severe attack of nervous exhaustion (neurasthenia), and was in urgent need of a long and complete rest.

With the certificate in his pocket, Kelemen went to Bloch's office. His heart was pounding and his face twitched—symptoms of neurasthenia. Bloch, to his sur-

prise, asked only when he intended to start his holiday. What's the matter with him? Has he gone out of his mind? Why is he suddenly so friendly? The reason for his good humor came out when he began to explain to Kelemen that he had just won a law-suit against his own brother. "It's not the actual advantage of the judgment, my boy. It's the satisfaction of putting something over on that rascal. . . ." I'm in luck. Success!

Days went by—bright May days. Kelemen lived with his eyes closed to the world, in the glory of a hundred plans and hopes. Success . . . One Saturday night he went to his sister's. After dinner, his brother-in-law handed him a cigar.

"This is good tobacco—Porto Rico."

Kelemen took it, and murmured, "Port Elizabeth."

"No, Porto Rico."

"Oh yes, of course."

"Andi, what's the matter with you?" asked his mother. "You're so absent-minded these days. Are you worrying about something? Is there anything wrong at the office?"

"No, thank God."

"Is it a woman?" asked Sari, impudently.

"It's not a woman," he said, with a look at his sister.

"It's a man."

"Good heavens!" gasped his mother. "Andor, are you crazy?"

Kelemen did not answer. He was thinking, to-day is the sixteenth. In ten days the meeting at the café, then the end of May, the beginning of June. Wouldn't it be wonderful to lie down—in a wide, fresh meadow, underneath a blue sky, and wait there until . . .

15

On the third day of June he received a telegram from Paris: Arrive fifth orient express please reserve rooms—kadar.

On the evening of the fourth the boys met in the café—Kelemen had hastily called them together. Katona suggested, while Kelemen held his breath, that Kelemen should meet them alone at the station and take them to the hotel, because they would probably be tired. But the majority accepted Simon's proposal that anybody who wanted should go to the station—but informally. Kelemen shrugged his shoulders and said "All right." It was agreed that whoever wanted to meet the train should come first to the café at eleven, and from there they would go, all together, to the station.

16

At eleven o'clock the next night everyone was at the café. Rona wore striped trousers and a black jacket—which he hastily defended against criticism by saying that he had come straight from the theatre. They sat around a large table, but said almost nothing. To-night they did not belong together. The bonds were broken. The threads of wit and cynicism, contempt, and superiority that had held them together were broken. The type-written letter from Port Elizabeth, the expensive newspaper, the telegram from Paris—these were realities, forerunners of great possibilities. What possibilities? Perhaps nothing extraordinary would happen. Kadar would arrive, look around, have a good time, and depart.

Yet someone might succeed—there was always a chance that you might become a part of his fantastic, gold-sprinkled destiny. But you had to believe in this destiny. They believed.

And they were silent, for fear of showing that each of them was filled with awe and envy. They were ashamed of being so impressed by the wonder, the miracle, of Toni Kadar—the Penguin.

Twenty minutes before train time they were on the platform. The station was nearly empty. They strolled up and down, and tried to look casual and unconcerned, but their cigarettes gave them away. Some glowed red every second and were quickly burned up, others hung forgotten between trembling fingers.

Suddenly the two gold eyes of the locomotive, and a shower of sparks from the low, stubby funnel, appeared in the distance. The Orient express steamed into the station, not an instant late. Kelemen saw him first, standing at the window of a sleeping-car. "There he is!" he exclaimed, and Kalotay cried out: "Hello, Kadar! Welcome. Here we are!"

Simon captured a porter, and they all followed the car that was still sliding slowly along. As soon as the train stopped, Kadar jumped off. They surrounded him, looking at him and at each other in silence for a moment. Then Kadar spoke: "Good-evening," he said quietly. "A regular delegation . . . It's awfully good of you." He was groping for words, a strange, hardly noticeable foreign accent in his speech. "We hadn't expected this." He pulled off his right glove.

Kelemen stepped forward. "How do you do? Do you remember me? I'm Kelemen. We're all glad you have come."

"I should say so!" shouted Kalotay. "Welcome home, Kadar. Awfully glad." He pushed his way up to Kadar, holding out his hand. The others chimed in: "Hello! Good to see you. Fine." All hands were stretched out, and Kadar shook them—a little defensively.

"Pardon me," he turned back towards the carriage. "I must help my wife down."

The interruption gave them a moment—enough for Budapest eyes—to sum Kadar up. He was tall, taller than any of them. His shoulders were broad, his face tanned. He wore grey flannel trousers and a somewhat darker jacket, a beige shirt with a long-lapelled collar attached, a soft silk tie. Strong, thick-soled sport shoes. No waistcoat. His grey hat was askew on his head, and a lock of light hair stuck out at one side. His gloves were of heavy pigskin, with visible stitches. Yes, exactly like an Englishman. In Budapest the dandies dressed like that.

Something else to see now; a woman jumped off the bottom step. Grey travelling dress, grey beret, grey stockings, grey flat-heeled shoes, grey suede gloves. Her brown face and dark eyes stood out in pleasant contrast against the greyness.

"These are my old schoolmates," said Kadar. No one noticed that he spoke Hungarian. Kempner stepped forward; he had learned, with the aid of the French-English teacher, a pretty little speech.

"*Madam, more than fourteen years have passed . . .*" He could get no further, for she interrupted in a somewhat tired voice, with only a slightly strange accent.

"Oh, please speak Hungarian. I'm Hungarian too."

Kempner's chin dropped, and the whole crowd stared

so incredulously that, in spite of her weariness, she burst into peals of laughter.

"You weren't expecting that, were you? Yes, I'm Hungarian too."

Simon was the first to recover. "All the better. Hurray!" he cried, and the others joined in. Kelemen regained his composure, and thought that it was time for him to emerge from the background. "Wonderful!" he said, in a loud voice. "Wouldn't you like to go to the hotel now? I've got rooms for you at the Ritz. One of us can come along with you."

"It's awfully good of you. Kelemen, why don't you come with us in the taxi? Anyway, let's get started."

They all moved towards the door. At the main entrance the porters had just come up with the luggage: two wardrobe trunks and six miscellaneous suitcases and bags.

"Look at that!" Simon nudged Marton. "Pretty grand, eh?"

Kadar shook hands with all of them. "It was really fine of you to meet us. We'll have to get together very soon again. I'll talk to Kelemen about it, and he can let you know."

"To the Ritz," Kelemen said to the driver. "Drive through the Andrassy Avenue." Then he turned to Kadar. "I've reserved two nice rooms with a bath between. Balcony looking out over the Danube. I hope you'll like it. Forty-eight pengö a day."

"Forty-eight," Kadar repeated thoughtfully. "Not quite two pounds. Thank you very much."

The boys walked slowly and in silence towards the Boulevard. Kalotay was the first to speak. "Well, that's over. And he already has a private secretary."

"Don't be so nasty," said Kempner, who was always amiable. "After all, someone should go with them."

"All right, all right. I don't mind in the least."

"Anyway," interposed Marton, "why shouldn't Kelemen go with them? He fished him out. But," he took Rona's arm, "did you get a look at their luggage!"

"What do you think of his wife?" said Rona. "Where do you suppose he picked her up?"

"We'll find out sooner or later," said big Weiss. "I'll bet it's a romantic story."

"You're wrong," little Weiss objected. "I'll bet it was the simple old story of two lonely Hungarians far from home."

"Maybe," said Simon. "But, you know, she's rather snappy. And did you notice her clothes? I only had a quick look at her . . ."

"Oh, did you!" Kalotay cried aggressively. "I know your quick looks. You gawked at her the whole time. But, as far as I could judge from my quick look—don't you think she's a bit oldish?"

"It was a long trip," said Kempner. "A day and a half in a railway carriage . . ."

"There are rouge and powder even in a train, and travelling in a comfortable sleeper can't be so tiring. But you know it's terribly difficult to tell a woman's age these days—especially foreigners. Anyway, it makes no difference. I don't think she's half bad."

"But this Kadar!" exclaimed little Weiss. "I wouldn't have recognized him. Did you see his clothes? I'll bet he has every stitch made in London."

"Yah!" scoffed big Weiss. "And by the time they got down there to the South Pole they would be out of style."

"You could tell by the way he talked that he has lived abroad a long time. Did you notice how he hesitated between words?" said Simon.

"Well," observed Katona, "that's not so extraordinary, considering that you've lived here a long time and still you can't talk Hungarian properly."

"Me?" exclaimed Simon angrily. "What do you mean I can't? But maybe you have not been fortunate enough to read my articles. . . ."

"I beg your pardon," replied Katona, "but what you talk and write is not Hungarian. It is Budapest slang."

"I guess that puts you in your place, Simon," laughed Rona. "Who's coming with me to a café?"

"I am," said Simon, "but first let's decide when we'll see Mister Kadar again."

"Maybe we should wait until he asks us?" Kempner suggested.

"No, we ought to do the asking. After all, he's our guest in a way," said Rona.

"It's all right to ask him, but he's not our guest. I certainly haven't any money to entertain him with. The best idea would be to meet him informally, maybe in Buda in a small garden restaurant."

"Why not take him to a cafeteria?"

"Or a kosher restaurant?"

"Shut up, all of you," cried Katona. "I think one of the restaurants on the Danube would be best, but no entertaining and no invitation. We'll not make any fuss—just send him word when and where he could see us. Don't worry, he'll come."

"Yes, that's sensible," agreed Kalotay. "I'll tell him . . ."

"Yes, you'll tell Kelemen to tell him. Shall we say Saturday night?"

It was settled. Underneath the stars and the street lights the marionette-shadows came to a stop, said good-bye to one another, and scattered.

17

Kelemen, the good manager, thrust his head through the half-open door to see that everything was in order. He was satisfied. The trunks were just being taken out of the luggage elevator. He shook hands once more with Kadar.

"Good-night, Kadar. We'll leave it at that—I'll phone to-morrow afternoon. If you should need me before then, you have my address and phone number. See you to-morrow." He left, pulling his hat over his eyes as he walked down the stairs.

So far, so good. My vacation begins to-morrow. The night porter made a low bow, and Kelemen raised a finger to his hat. So she's Hungarian. Pleasant to look at. It must have been an adventure that threw them together. That's all right. Everything is all right. He said ask all the fellows for dinner. Easy enough. The sooner that's over the better. I'll suggest the upper restaurant on the Island.

Kelemen walked out of the hotel, round the little park—he had not noticed where he was going—and found himself on the embankment opposite the hotel. Second floor—he saw the lighted windows and two shadows on the balcony. Romance. That's right. He shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

The two of them stood on the balcony above the corso in the starlit night. Rows of lights in the water. The Citadel and Bastion were lit by flood lights, as though part of a stage. Somewhere to the right, the blue neon lights of an advertising sign. Across the river faint, yellowish sparks twinkled on the hillside. Far away on the bridge a green lamp. Slowly, noiselessly a brightly-lighted vessel passed along the river.

"It's beautiful," said the woman on the balcony.

"Really beautiful."

"Yes," he agreed. "Budapest is a beautiful city."

"Almost like a stage setting." They stood in silence.

"And so still," she added slowly.

"Yes, after Paris. But this is a quiet neighbourhood."

"It's funny that Budapest should be a strange city to me."

"It's been so long that it is strange to me too."

Complete quiet. For a while two burning cigarette ends glowed in the darkness on the balcony, then the two little red lights, the two shadows, disappeared from above the dark bank of the Danube.

IV

THE HOLIDAY

1

THE two compartments of the sleeping-car were connected by a small lavatory, both doors of which were open and fastened back. Only the lower beds were made. One compartment was dark, but the reading light in the other was still burning. Stillness—train-stillness, with the monotonous clatter of the wheels in the background: one-two-three-four; one-two-three-four. They beat a perfect rhythm for any tune you want, an excellent rhythm that can be changed at will. One-two, one-two, one-two-three, one-two-three—waltz time now. Then a syncopated tune, four notes to each beat. Sometimes the rails cried out a long-drawn plaintive wail that was part of the music too. One-two-three-four . . .

In the lighted compartment a newspaper rustled; the sheet crackled, the page turned over with a swish and settled back with a whisper that could be clearly heard by ears to which the clatter of the wheels had become as silence. The light in the door-frame was faint and peaceful, reflected from the brass fittings. Under the half-drawn shade a passing train scattered flashes of light. Then the switch clicked, the light went out, and everything was dark. Now, suddenly, he could smell through the train odor the faint, cool fragrance of the perfume they had bought together a few days before. A minute

later another click and the light appeared again in the door-frame.

"Darling," he called out, "what is it? Can't you sleep?"

She stood in the lighted door. "Would you mind—it's so hot, and I can't open the window—will you fix it?"

He went into the other compartment, knelt on the bed, and lowered the window a little.

"Thank you. I didn't know you had to push it. I thought you had to pull."

"Go to sleep, sweet. Good-night."

"Good-night. . . . Tell me, when do we get to Vienna?"

"Early in the morning, very early. You needn't be up."

"And Southampton?"

"Day after to-morrow—in the evening."

"Oh. Good-night."

He sat on the side of his bed. The light went out in the other room. He could go to sleep now. Everything was quiet except for the wheels. One-two-three-four. One-two-three-four. . . .

2

One-two-three-four: She didn't say yes, she didn't say no: one-two-three-four: She didn't say stay, she didn't say go: one-two-three-four: the little American girl sang it in her husky little voice. Good tune, good orchestra too. They played it on the Margit Island that first night we had dinner with the boys. Kelemen was clumsy that night, terribly clumsy. I told him it was my party, but after dinner they began digging in their pockets, pulling

out wallets, and arguing: "Thank you, but really we can't let you. . . ." That quiet, pale Katona was stubbornest . . . strange people. . . .

Sometimes Kadar thought for a moment that he knew them well, as if they were back at school; and then a word, a phrase, an unfamiliar gesture, and he had to ask himself: Who is this stranger? Fourteen years. They were all strangers—Rona, Kalotay, all of them. I'm a stranger to them too. It was awful at the table in the beginning, when everything went dead quiet, and that fellow Marton—how his face has changed!—started to talk about the big companies that had gone bankrupt. And then he looked at me sidewise and said: Sorry, Kadar, this can't interest you. Let's change the subject." And then nobody said a word. In a week we'll be leaving. A week is long enough to see everything. And then Ila began humming "She didn't say yes," to break the silence. Ila had a good time. She loved Budapest, and the Island, and she liked Amman. He's good-looking, and has nice manners, and he wore evening clothes. He and Kelemen and I were the only ones who did. That was a mistake too; the others must have felt uncomfortable in street clothes. And then Kelemen asked me if we would like to go to the American Bar for a drink after the others had left, and I said yes, although God knows I didn't want to. Tactless the way he leaned over to Amman to tell him something in a whisper. After all, why make a secret of it? The others could have come too if they had wanted to, but they left—Weiss and the other Weiss and the rest. They began to call for the head waiter—terribly awkward. Well, what difference does it make?

After midnight they went to the American Bar. The

little American singer came too, and sat beside the drummer and sang. Pretty little thing. The bar was pleasant, a bit too large, but that didn't matter. Ilia loved it.

She was dancing with Amman when a small party came in—four or five young men and three girls—and stood by the entrance looking for a table. One of the girls wore a light green evening dress. Not a very wonderful dress—it looked as if it had been made over—but still smart. Everyone looked at her, at her crown of shining, heavy, red hair, parted in the middle and wound in two great coils around her head. She smiled and waved her white gloves at Kelemen. “My sister,” said Kelemen. “What in the world is she doing here?” She came towards them.

“Hello, Andi!”—her voice was strange and yet familiar. So was her face, the milk-white skin underneath the red hair; he had seen those blue-green eyes before. “What are you doing in such a grand place?”

“I could ask you the same thing.” Kelemen seemed a little embarrassed. “What are you doing here, Joli? Who are you with?”

“With them,” she pointed to the others. “Just some boys and girls.”

Kadar stood up. “My name is Kadar,” he said, and held out his hand.

“This is my friend, Antal Kadar,” said Kelemen quickly. “You wouldn't remember him—you were very little when . . .”

“Oh, yes. You are Andi's schoolmate who lives abroad. I've heard a lot about you. Do you like it here?”

He smiled. “Yes, very much. It's changed a great deal since . . .”

"Do you dance?" she tilted her head to one side.

"Yes." Pretty little thing. "Shall we?"

"I'd love to, but I have to go back to the others now. Will you come over later and ask me again?"

"No, that won't do," Kelemen interjected harshly. "I don't even know who you are with. But you can come and sit with us after a while—if Kadar doesn't object."

"Don't be such a tyrant," Kadar laughed. Then, turning to Joli: "Will you come back?"

"All right. Don't look so cross, Andi." She laughed and held out her hand, a cool, small, white hand, and went towards the other table. . . . He knew her walk, too. . . .

"I say, Andor, I didn't remember that you had a sister, or rather sisters. Joli must be very young, isn't she?"

"Twenty-one," Kelemen answered severely. "No, only twenty."

Ila was a good dancer. They danced a deal at home, at parties, sometimes at the Imperial Hotel, just the two of them, sometimes at the villa, to phonograph music. She danced smoothly, gracefully, and held herself very straight.

They were good-looking youngsters—the ones Joli was with. Good-looking, well-dressed, but everybody was well-dressed in Budapest. Kelemen was still mumbling: "How on earth did she get here? She shouldn't be coming to such an expensive place."

"It's all right," said Kadar. "You mustn't be too hard on her. She's really a charming girl. How many sisters have you?"

"Two. Didn't you know Sari? She's married now.

But I don't like the idea of Joli's coming here. A dance hall is no place for a youngster."

"You're old-fashioned," Kadar interrupted. "No harm done if she comes with her friends to dance. . . ." He left the sentence unfinished. Joli's red hair gleamed across the tables. A wig, he thought, a mask, and fancy dress; and a strange, uncertain feeling came over him. Joli turned her head, and he could see her white face, her blue-green eyes, unnaturally big underneath blackened lashes. "Freckles," he murmured.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. . . . Don't bother just yet, but when my wife comes back, ask your sister if she won't . . ."

"All right." Kelemen's eyes opened wide, and he leaned over to the champagne bucket.

She didn't say yes . . . Joli danced with her red head close to a black shoulder. Ila and Amman came slowly back to the table.

"You dance very well," she said to Amman, as they sat down. "A little differently from the way we do—with more temperament, maybe."

"Oh," said Amman with mock modesty, "dancing is probably my only accomplishment." He looked at Ila out of the corner of his eye, and smoothed his little blond moustache.

"Who was the pretty girl?" Ila asked.

"My sister," Kelemen answered promptly.

"She's a lovely child. Why don't you bring her over. I think I'd like to know a Budapest girl after so many serious Budapest gentlemen." She laughed.

The American girl sang again. Kelemen helped himself to more champagne. The Imperial Hotel in Port Elizabeth is on the seashore. Some Germans stayed

there last year—movie people. One of them looked like Amman. During the eight years at school I didn't say a hundred words to him, and now we are sitting together in a cabaret. Joli is twenty. I wouldn't have thought she was Kelemen's sister. "Prosit!" he raised his glass and touched with Kelemen. Ila is drinking a lot to-night. She likes champagne. Let her have a good time. That young German movie director . . . no, he doesn't look like him after all. . . . Is her hair dyed? No, red hair goes with a milk-white skin. Perhaps her lips aren't even painted; the red-and-white type often has naturally red lips. I can't remember—are her lips thin or full?

He searched the dance floor, but Joli was not there. His eyes met Kelemen's for a moment; Kelemen suddenly turned away, blew cigarette smoke out into the air, and went on talking to Ila. . . . "The other man with them is Bartok, of the Industrial Bank, and that woman at the fifth table in this row is his ex-wife. She divorced him recently. The papers were full of it. The woman in black is Baroness Halban. The Halbans are an aristocratic Austrian family, but they say she is Jewish. The young man there with the monocle . . ." Kelemen seemed to know everyone.

Kadar half listened to his gossip, and searched for Joli. She was dancing again. As they danced nearer she looked towards their table—no, not the table, straight at him, then glanced at Ila. Ila sat between Kelemen and Amman. "Ask your sister to have a glass of champagne with us, Kelemen," she said.

Kelemen looked across to the other table and rose—tall, well-built, with sleek black hair and a pleasant face—an everyday sort of face. Joli had red hair, and was, perhaps, an inch taller than Ila. The eyes and forehead

were not the same, nor the shape of her face, and her mouth was completely different, and yet the whole effect resembled . . . Kelemen reached the other table and spoke to one of the young men. Then Joli stood up and looked round the room. Odd how such a crown of red hair could give the illusion of importance to an otherwise uninteresting head. The thick, red hair, the milk-white face—not a beautiful face, not even really pretty. There was something almost common in it. Yet everybody looked at her, and she looked back, enjoying her power to attract attention. She and Kelemen came between the crowded tables, her hand on his arm. Nobody would have taken them for brother and sister.

“Allow me to present my sister,” said Kelemen.

Ila looked at Joli between narrowed lids. “How do you do? I’ve just told your brother what a charming sister he has.”

Amman rose, clicked his heels, and kissed Joli’s hand. She stood hesitating for a moment, then sat down nonchalantly and reached for a champagne glass. “I can’t stay but a minute.”

Her mouth was not pretty. It was wide, and the lips were too thin.

“I’m so glad to know you,” she said to Ila. “Would you mind if I came to see you sometime? You must know such a lot of interesting things. I’ve seen Africa in the movies, but they’re probably none of them true.” She laughed, and her voice rang clear. I’ve heard that laugh before. . . .

“I’d love to have you come.”

Her expression changes with every word she says. I’ve seen her before. Her narrow shoulders, her slim figure—like Tilly’s, of course. Her hair is a brighter red than

Tilly's. Her hands . . . she raised her glass . . . her hands are like Tilly's.

"Tell me, Joli, do you like music? Do you play?" She will answer: yes, the piano.

"No, I don't play anything. I tried to learn the piano once—I have a good ear—but I couldn't make a go of it, so I stopped." She stood up. "Shall we dance this one?" she said to Kadar.

Amman bowed lightly to Ila, and they went towards the dance floor. Joli held her head a little sideways, near his cheek; a stray red hair tickled his eyelash. Her slim hand was dry and cool, her steps followed his like a shadow in the slow rhythm of the music. I must say something—anything to break the silence—it's a lovely night . . . you remind me of someone . . . you are a good dancer . . . But he said nothing, and she was silent too. Only the music spoke with the wail of saxophones, the beat of drums. The strange, irritating melody enveloped them, the rhythm directed their steps—and he felt that, beyond the dance floor, beyond the cabaret with its dissolving shapes and forms, in an unknown quiet they were bound together for ever through space and time. That was how it began.

Nothing happened in the days that followed. Budapest—bright, early summer Budapest, with its motor boat excursions on the Danube, automobile trips to the hills of Buda, handsome women everywhere. Budapest in early June.

We are strangers here—as if we were in London or Paris or Berlin. When we have had enough we will go somewhere else. We will have seen one more city. We are interested only in the surface: our hotel is good, the traffic in the streets is heavy, but just as well regulated

as in any other large city, the bank clerks are polite, the people have pleasant manners, the men in the streets are not well dressed, and there are too many advertisements of bankruptcy sales. But all that doesn't concern us. We are strangers. We needn't look at anything unpleasant.

At first Ila wanted to walk around the city. They went along the Andrassy Avenue and down the Boulevard. Once they ventured into an outlying district, but he was soon tired, and Ila was restless and nervous. They went back to the hotel. We are strangers. A few streets of the inner city make up the visitors' quarter. In the big tea rooms you don't have to smell the cold, sour odor of cheap places farther out. We are strangers.

With Kelemen's help, he hired a car. He felt more at home when he rode in Budapest than when he walked. Kelemen called almost every day, always cheerful, always eager to be of service.

"Kelemen is really a charming person," remarked Ila. "To tell you the truth, I was afraid at first that he would be a nuisance with his eternal helpfulness, weren't you?" There was uncertainty in her voice, but she was uncertain about Budapest—about all unfamiliar things. Before they came he had told her very little about Budapest, and then only general things. She must be wondering now, he thought, how I lived, and where. She may have wondered, but she never asked questions, and so neither of them ever spoke of it. A foreign city—we shan't stay long.

The car made things easier. When they had nothing planned, the time was filled with driving about. It was like a movie—amusing, superficial. I don't have to look at things that don't interest me, and when I've had

enough I can quit. Ila drove with him at first. Once they passed through the street where his old school was. For eight years, twice a day, he had seen a blind beggar sitting at the street corner, a dilapidated old hat in his lap, waiting for alms. The old beggar was still there. He looked exactly the same.

"Fourteen years ago . . ."

"What did you say?" asked Ila.

"Nothing. It's not important. I was thinking . . ."

Suddenly he felt depressed.

After that he went out alone. Ila preferred to stay in her room and sleep after lunch, but some restless impulse sent him driving through the streets. If anyone had asked him, he could not have said why he went along slowly through the quiet sections of the town. Then one day he thought suddenly: I might meet Joli. It gave him no pleasure to drive aimlessly—he hated the sight of long stretches of asphalt. They reminded him of those terrible days in London when he wandered over endless expanses of grey pavement, searching for something, he did not quite know what. Ever since then he had dreaded the idea of walking far, and whenever he could, he got out of it.

One afternoon Ila asked: "Are you going for a drive while I rest?"

"Yes."

"Where to?"

"I don't know. All over the place, as usual, I suppose."

"Romantic?"

He could not keep from blushing. "Yes, romantic." Quite right. No sense in it. We'll go away soon.

Kelemen telephoned the next morning. They had not

seen the boys since the dinner party on the Island a week ago. Amman had telephoned once. Ila talked to him: How were they? He hoped they were enjoying themselves. That was all. And now Kelemen telephoned early in the morning. The weather was lovely: would they care to run up to Esztergom to the bathing beach? Ila took the receiver, and arranged for them to meet at the pool. They would lunch there, and in the afternoon, if it wasn't too hot, they could drive to Gödöllő.

In the lounge of the swimming pool they met Kelemen; he kissed Ila's hand. "It's been a long time since I saw you, and my conscience hurts me for leaving you alone in a big, strange place."

"Oh," said Ila, "my husband is not quite a stranger here, you know. Besides, he's re-discovering the city. Would you believe it—every day he wanders about the streets by himself." She said it in exactly the same tone as her "Romantic?" the day before.

"Is that so?" chaffed Kelemen. "What is it, your lost youth, Toni?"

Kadar was annoyed, and went off towards the swimming pool without answering. When he reached the pool, he discovered Joli sitting in a deck chair. She wore a red suit and red slippers, and her red hair sparkled in the sun.

"Good-morning, Joli."

"Hello! how are you? Where's Mrs Kadar?"

Ila came up. "I was just asking about you, my dear." Her voice was friendly. "How are you?"

Blue-green eyes—funny I hadn't noticed them before. Or had I forgotten them? So many colors; white skin, her whole body is white, almost unnaturally pale. And her eyes and hair. She doesn't have freckles? . . . why

should I expect her to have freckles? She doesn't use make-up. Of course, Tilly had freckles. He sat down in the deck chair beside her.

"I wish I could go away for a long trip somewhere," said Joli, suddenly. "But I can't afford it. I haven't any money."

I haven't any money. How curious. She said it with a funny little grimace. Who looks after her—her parents? Her brother? Are they hard up?

"Last year I didn't go very far—only to the lake-side. I want so much to go really a long way off—Switzerland or the south of France. Oh, what's the use! It's not too bad if you come to the beach every day. But even that costs money. The nicest things are week-ends, when we go on excursions up the Danube with the boys."

"Boys?" asked Ila.

"Yes, one is a doctor, two lawyers, two from the bank—and the girls, of course. They're amusing for two or three days."

Joli climbed over the balustrade. For an instant she stood poised lightly on the stone coping, then raised her arms with a slow, broad movement. Her suit showed every detail of her figure, her fresh little breasts, as she dived into the water.

A blue-green wave brought them together—the same color as her eyes. His arm touched her shoulder, and she drew quickly away.

Ila sparkled in the sun, in the blue water, in the brilliant air. Her face was clear and young, her black hair and eyes shone.

The beach was getting crowded. "Look, there is the English couple from the Ritz," someone said behind them.

"I've seen the man alone in a car," replied another subdued voice. "But the little red-head with them isn't English. I noticed her last winter, all over the place. She has her eyes on the Englishman."

He looked sideways at Ila and Joli to see if they had heard. Probably not. Then he took a cigarette from his case and turned round slowly. Two young men were sitting behind him, with a fat blonde woman. They thought that Joli . . . One of the men had a cigarette between his lips. Kadar stood up and went towards him.

"May I trouble you for a light?" he asked in Hungarian. Three pairs of embarrassed eyes, three red faces. "Thank you." He went back to his chair. When, a minute later, he turned round again the three had disappeared.

They stayed at the bath for lunch. Kelemen was obliged to leave before noon—an appointment in town—business—he would tell Kadar about it some day if he was interested. The excursion to Gödöllő was postponed. Kelemen would telephone again. After lunch they lay back in deck chairs in the shade. Kadar bought a copy of *The Times*, and, while he looked at it, he listened to the two women's quiet voices. In the shadow the red hair shone with a dull glow. As he glanced at the little figure in the red swimming suit, the pool, the gleaming water, the people disappeared, and a garden with high stone walls took their place—huge old trees threw a leaf mosaic on the sunlit path to the villa—the sound of Tilly's piano sang in his ears.

He let the paper fall, and, forgetting people and places, looked with hungry, burning eyes at the young body in the red suit.

Joli talked of herself. It was dull and monotonous at

home—Mother was old and liked to talk of the past. Sari was a good wife, but she would be just like her mother some day. Her brother-in-law wasn't interested in anything but the shop. Then there was the baby. Andi was the only amusing one in the whole family, but he didn't live with them. "I really couldn't tell you what I do with myself all day long. Probably nothing. I help Sari and Mother, and I read a little. I thought once of getting a job in an office, so I learned shorthand and typing, but it's impossible to find anything these days. It's not so bad in summer—the beach and trips up the Danube. But in winter you go to a movie once a week, or a bunch of us go dancing in some cheap place. You make your own clothes, and sometimes you get so tired of it all." Joli spoke quietly, with her head a little raised as she turned towards Ila. Her voice sounded resigned, but a little wistful. The great coil of her hair came undone, and she let it down. With fingers spread apart she threw back the whole heavy mass. "Sometimes I go to the theatre, but not much. And concerts—I like concerts best."

As he listened to her, he wanted to ask her how it was that she had no money for a trip, or rather where she got the money for the swimming pool, the week-end excursions, the movies, and concerts. What's the matter with me? Nonsense. Her brother-in-law and Kelemen must give her money, or—there is no or. Anyway, it's not my business.

"Oh, Lord!" Joli went on. "Sometimes I think there is nothing so useless in the world as a girl like me who has no purpose in life." She was silent for a little, then, with a change of tone: "Women like Mother and Sari live for their husbands and children, but I have

nothing to do except . . . to think how dreadful it would be if I had to marry someone like Sari's husband. Then I wonder how it would be if I were rich, and could do just as I like."

She sat up in the deck chair and stretched out her two white arms in a wide arch. Melodrama, he said to himself, melodrama. Suddenly he realized that Ila was looking at him.

In the evening they drove Joli home.

"I hope we are going to see more of you from now on," said Ila, pleasantly, as they left her. "Give me a ring at the hotel. We'll be here for a few more days at least, won't we, Toni?"

"Yes, very likely."

Joli held out her hand. He took it and tried to raise it to his lips, but her bare arm stiffened against him.

He did not see the number of the house where Joli lived, but he remembered the street.

The next day, something unexpected happened. Captain and Mrs Glynn, of the British Legation, called at the hotel. Edith Glynn was an old friend of Ila's. They had recently been transferred to Budapest, and had learned by chance at the Ministry yesterday that Ila and her husband were in town. "What luck! Do you play tennis? Splendid!"

The Glynn's stayed to lunch, and afterwards they drove together to the polo grounds on the Island. The Captain played, and his White Devils beat the Hungarians 4:2½. Kadar was restless, and kept looking at his watch.

"Have you an appointment?" Ila asked gently.

"No, why?"

This was the hour he had spent driving aimlessly through the streets yesterday, and the day before, and the

days before that. He knew that he was restless because he had to sit looking at a polo game instead of driving. Habit, that's all. Of course she's glad to see English people. That's habit too. We are English really. The hours went by, but his restlessness did not leave him. I've got so used to driving at a certain time . . .

After the match, they went to the confectioner's for tea. Captain Glynn followed them a little later. Soft music, dancing . . . He glanced at his watch again, and as he looked up his eyes met Ila's. A sharp, narrow wrinkle crossed her forehead. He was angry with himself. I'm a fool to get so upset. The minutes went by slowly with music and gay talk. Captain Glynn is a fine fellow. Edith is charming. This is an expensive place. She wouldn't be likely to come here. She is sitting at home now . . . doing nothing . . . They danced, discussed a tennis game, and arranged to meet again.

It seemed at first that Ila did not approve of his driving about every day—at least she did not understand why he did it. Then, one afternoon, he stayed at the hotel.

“Aren't you going out?”

He was silent for a moment, then said slowly: “You have never asked me where I go.”

“Why should I? I know. Remember what Kelemen said the other day—searching for your lost youth? Probably I would, too, if I had lived here when I was young.”

No more was said. Ila rested every afternoon while he drove through the city. Once he went through the street where Joli lived, but he did not see her anywhere. Another time he pulled up opposite her house. This restlessness I have constantly—is it because I don't see her? What does it matter whether I see her or not? What if I went up and rang her bell. “Hello, Joli.” Crazy!

We'll leave soon. I won't get myself into anything. She reminds me of Tilly—or is it only her red hair? I'll leave in a day or two.

His hands trembled on the wheel, the gears scraped, and the car started with a jerk. At a crossing a policeman shouted at him: "Come on, come on! Can't you see the green light?"

At the hotel he found Kelemen talking to Ila. He had telephoned, and Ila had asked him to come up. Kelemen was telling about himself, about his office. He was supposed to be having a vacation, but his manager had asked him to come in that morning to discuss some difficult business that he, Kelemen, had started a few months ago. It was going through, but, unfortunately, there was a difference of opinion among the members of the board about certain details. "A new arrangement with the railroad companies . . . but, naturally, this wouldn't interest you. To cut a long story short, the firm will profit, and, of course, I have to see that I don't lose."

Yes, thought Kadar, you need your profits. You have your family.

"The trouble is that the board are a hard-boiled lot, and I'll have to put my foot down if I'm to get my share."

Kadar suddenly interrupted him. "Tell me, Andor, how much do they pay you?"

What a stupid, tactless question! Ila looked away, astonished and shocked. Kelemen raised his eyebrows in embarrassment. "One-fifth of what I need to live respectably, and one-tenth of what I deserve for my work." A suitable answer to such an indiscreet question. A deep line appeared on Kelemen's forehead. "So little, as a matter of fact, that if I told you, you wouldn't believe it."

He went on talking bitterly of the fight for existence. It would be much better to leave the country altogether. Joli had said how poor she was, and how bored. He remembered the home-made green dress she wore that first night, and thought of the low-cut, dark silk marvel that Ila had bought in Paris.

"Joli?" said Kelemen at that moment. "She's all right. I saw her just after lunch to-day. She asked about you."

"Tell her I'd love to see her again," said Ila. "Why don't you bring her with you some evening?"

They decided to have dinner together the next night at a little road-house in the country. Kadar had an impulse to send Kelemen immediately to make sure that Joli had no other plans. I'm almost always at home . . . doing nothing . . . But she might have plans.

After dinner they strolled along the embankment, twice up, twice down, then went to the terrace of the American Bar to watch the crowds. A group of boys and girls walked past—Joli. She saw them, and when Ila waved, she came up to their table. She wore a short, pale blue skirt and white jumper, her small blue hat was in her hand. Ila asked her to sit down.

"Oh, I couldn't! Not in these clothes. Besides, I can't leave the others, though I'd love to stay."

"We'll forgive you this time. What about to-morrow night?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. Andi told me about it. It's terribly nice of you."

"Do you know, that child is really very pretty," said Ila, when Joli had left them. "It's not easy to look pretty when you have red hair. Such perfect skin and curious eyes. It's a shame her mouth isn't nicer."

"Yes, her mouth is ugly."

"No, you can't call it ugly, exactly. But what does it matter when you're twenty? Think of it, Toni, twenty!"

He thought of it, but it did not seem to help him.

The next evening Joli and her brother were waiting for them in the lobby. Joli wore the same green dress, and Ila noticed it was the color of her eyes.

"Yes, isn't it?" Joli laughed. "But it was an accident. The dress was white, but I had it dyed, and it came back this color." Her mouth—her mouth was not pretty—too large. But her teeth were lovely, and they shone when she laughed.

Joli sat in front with Kadar. The car moved slowly.

"I like the city much better at night than in the daytime," said Joli. "Everything looks different—and bigger. Are there more lights in Paris than here?"

"I should say so! But that's not the real difference between Paris and Budapest." They drove past the station. A stream of taxis and private cars held them up.

"You know, I love stations," Joli was talking again. "Sometimes I go and stand on the platform, just to be there. I do wish I could go off somewhere very far. It was too funny—last year my sister and I went to visit some people in Hatvan—you know, about an hour from Budapest. Sari nearly had a fit, but I didn't care—I wouldn't get out at Hatvan, and stayed in the train for another half-hour's ride. I don't know why—it was childish. I suppose it is because stupid little pleasures like that give you the illusion . . ."

There was less and less traffic on the open road, and the heavy car went faster. Speed. With the sudden restlessness in him—with Joli beside him—speed. He

wanted to dash on without stopping—to Helena Village, anywhere, it did not matter—through space under the still, black sky.

The restaurant was crowded, and they had to wait to have a table set up for them in the garden beside the railing. From there they could see the turn in the road, the white highway winding into the darkness of the night, the hills outlined against the sky. Monotonous but cheerful music came from the black meadows. Couples dancing on the verandah, Chinese lanterns—curious, this melancholy dance music over the open meadows—candles flickering on the tables. He looked at Joli. She was very quiet.

“Are you sleepy, Joli?” asked Ila. “You look tired.”

“Oh, no. Not at all. I’m only thinking how lovely and strange it is here.”

Yes, lovely and strange, this mixture of city elegance and country simplicity—the odor of champagne mingled with the smell of new hay; the candles, and the headlights on the road. Joli’s face was wax-like in the candle light. He reached out for some bread, and his hand touched hers. She quivered and drew back. He changed the position of his chair and, as if by chance, touched her arm. She trembled again and moved away.

They ate their supper, talked, danced. When he held her in his arms to the slow rhythm of a negro tune, she did not tremble. He held her closer, but she was calm, though her breath came faster for a moment. When the music stopped he lifted her reluctant hand and kissed it just above the wrist. Her wrist was slender, and her ankles and legs so slim and lithe. Narrow hips and shoulders—and she was twenty, think of it, Toni, twenty!

Ila was in high spirits. She drank and was gay, and had a pleasant word for everything. Droll, she looked so young, younger even than Joli. Perhaps it was the mask-like white face that made her seem older.

With a burst of wild honking, a noisy party drove up in a rickety old car camouflaged as a racer—three young men and two girls. They sat down at the next table.

"Hello! Hello everybody!" It was Simon in a suit the color of mixed ice-cream. "How splendid meeting you here." His voice was loud, and he waved his arms. "If you don't mind I'll park myself with you after a while. I'm a fifth wheel over there."

"How do you know you won't be a fifth wheel over here?" Ila interrupted him, laughing.

"Lady, I'd rather be your fifth wheel than anyone else's." And as soon as he had swallowed the last bite of his supper he came across to them.

"It's only luck that I'm here. They picked me up in front of a café. Do you know them?—Lori, the musical comedy actress with a textile magnate, and a colleague of mine with somebody called Maria—nameless, but nice. I didn't want to come, and now I find you here." Simon was in good form. Simon knew everybody and everything: who was in debt and how much and to whom; who was unfaithful and who only flirting; divorces, marriages, births, and deaths. Simon knew all about the aristocrats who looked like gigolos, and the gigolos who looked like aristocrats; no one could hide a secret from Simon. He kept a record of the contents of all heads and all pockets.

Ila was amused, and led him on with questions. Then, suddenly, he was silent and looked thoughtfully into the sky. "And yet," he said in a different, subdued voice,

"all this is disgusting, putrid. If you took the trouble to look behind the scenes . . . but who would take the trouble? I certainly would be the last to look, and the very last to tell what I saw. We are still young, thank God. And the younger generation? All they care about is motor cars and saxophones. Ideals and desires are getting more primitive. Our age wears on its banners not the cross, the sword, the book, not even the bag of gold—but the steering wheel couchant and the saxophone rampant. And we have to hustle, we have to rush to catch time, to catch ourselves. We have to race with the steering wheel and the saxophone. And if our souls, crippled between 1914 and 1918, can't keep up the pace, we throw them away. They hamper our hands on the steering wheel, and stop our ears so that we can't hear the saxophone that makes us forget our worries. And so forth!" He shrugged his shoulders. "Crazy! I've made a speech."

"Bravo!" cried Pa. "You're an orator and a poet and a cynic—slightly superficial, if you don't mind my saying so, and a little dishonest—but lyric! Toni, let's have some more champagne. But you're right—we're still young—in an old world."

Young. Twenty, think of it, Toni, twenty! I am thirty-two and she is thirty-six. He asked Joli to dance. As they walked towards the verandah, he caught hold of her bare arm and pressed it against his side.

"Please let me go. Don't. You mustn't."

"What mustn't I do? What's wrong?" He did not let her arm go until they reached the dance floor.

"All the English are good dancers, aren't they?" said Joli. "I like to see people dancing together when they are the same height, and I only come to your shoulder."

If I were to bend down—she only comes to my shoulder—and kiss her mouth . . .

On the way back Ila took the wheel, Kelemen beside her. Joli and Kadar sat behind. Joli leaned back, her black coat covering her entirely, only her white face shining in the darkness. Her hands rested on her lap, holding her gloves so still that they seemed lifeless. She closed her eyes. Suppose I said to her: Joli, give me your hand. Then he saw reflected in the little mirror Ila's brilliant, dark eyes as she concentrated on the road. Ila, with her clear, clever black eyes. Her deep, shining black eyes that night on the steamer off Gibraltar. Her hungry, eager lips, and her glowing white body as she stood in the darkness of the stateroom when he first came to her.

If I were to say now, very softly, so that only she could hear it: Joli, give me your hand. . . .

"Look! how they shine!" Joli called out suddenly. "Did you see? A rabbit or a cat beside the road, and its eyes sparkled so green!"

When they reached the house, Kadar helped Joli out of the car. Ila stayed at the wheel, and called: "Good-night, Joli. Ring us up soon."

He took her hand. "Good-night, Joli." If I were to whisper. . . . And he felt her hand moving gently, obediently upwards. He raised it to his lips and kissed it, then looked again into her green-blue eyes. Kelemen stood beside the car, and watched them with a curious, wondering look.

He did not expect Joli to call for a day or two, but when the third day went by without any news from her, and when that evening Ila took her little red-leather diary and said: "We ought to book our rooms in Switzerland—

or do you think it would be safe to telegraph just before we leave here?"—then the same restlessness took hold of him as before. He thought that if he had driven through the streets those three days he might have—would have—seen Joli.

"Yes, it's a good idea to write for rooms," he answered calmly, and then was silent.

"Good. Then I'll write to St. Moritz and Flims and—what was the name of that other place you wanted to go?"

He did not answer, but stared at the newspaper he held without reading.

"You're not listening to me. Don't you think we've had enough of Budapest?"

"All right." He slowly folded the newspaper. "But first I think I ought to have a look into that other business before we leave. The property, you know—I've telephoned Abbott about it."

"Are you seriously thinking of putting money into it?" asked Ila in a cold voice.

He answered quickly, eagerly: "Well, not exactly putting money into it, but it's worth considering. Abbott thought so too."

"How on earth could Abbott know without being here? But you're the judge, and if you think you ought to," she picked up the newspaper from the table, "go ahead. You know best, but I don't like the idea."

He did not answer. Abbott had thought so, too—childish. What could he have said, except: "Have a look at it, and if you think it's wise, take it up. Only remember that we can't keep any permanent investment on the Continent."

The previous week Kalotay had telephoned, asked

carefully how they were, and said he would like a word with Kadar if it wasn't a bother. He wanted to ask his opinion as a building expert about something that might, at the same time, interest him from a business point of view. Kalotay thought it was a good proposition, but . . . Reluctantly Kadar agreed to a meeting.

"Which one is he?" asked Ila, when he told her.

"That—how shall I describe him?—rather fat, with a black moustache and a loud voice."

"I don't remember him."

Kalotay came, bringing Ila a bunch of flowers. He was dreadfully sorry he couldn't give it to her personally. Ila was out with the Glynnns. Kalotay lit a cigarette and sniffed at the brandy Kadar offered him.

"Sorry. I can't indulge, I'm a teetotaller." Then he launched his attack. It was to his credit that he began with perfect frankness. "Look here, Kadar, as a matter of fact, I don't so much need your advice. You have lived away for so long that you couldn't understand our special problems here. But, to put it quite simply, I have a business proposition that might interest anybody, stranger or no stranger. You're a good business man, and you have money—and I know a way of investing some of it with a splendid chance to make a profit."

"What sort of proposition is it?"

Kalotay began to explain. He spoke of a client of his who was a very important person, of extensive deals in real estate and building contracts, of excellent connections, of a wide circle of friends. He spoke eagerly, with broad gestures, in sharp colors and strong emphasis, as if he were giving a lecture. Yet his words centred around a very simple and transparent business. Kalotay was investing money for the important person. He lent it

at high interest rates against mortgages on valuable and not so valuable property, and when the debtor got into difficulties, off with his head. The important person became in this way the owner of a number of valuable and not so valuable properties, cheaply acquired. Kalotay now thought it excellent business if someone would buy these properties at higher prices. A very simple proposition.

Kadar listened to the long speech and found it a little hard not to smile. So he thinks I'll buy a three-story tenement house, a one-story villa, a factory, and a building site.

"I can't think of a better way of investing capital," continued Kalotay. "As for the formalities and small details, I can offer my services. In view of my exceptional experience with real estate, I can assure you that your interests will be safe in my hands." What reason have I to own property in Budapest? "And in case you decide to put up buildings on the site, you would be doing a great service to the Hungarian public." Why should I want to do a great service to the Hungarian public? But suddenly the smile stopped. He had an idea.

"See here, Kalotay," he said, staring into the cigarette smoke, "I can't give you a definite answer yet, of course; I don't even know whether or not I'd be interested. I came to Budapest for a holiday." This was their fourth week in Budapest, they would soon have to leave, and there was still no word from Joli. "But I'll have a look at the properties, and there is just a chance I may be interested."

Kalotay's face lit up. He suppressed a sly grin of satisfaction, and his small, black eyes sparkled behind his pince-nez.

"Fair enough. We'll go into it all thoroughly the next time."

They agreed to meet again soon, and Kalotay left. Kadar went out on the balcony and watched the people along the embankment. Two small boys sat astride a bench, playing noughts and crosses. A fat old nurse was pushing a perambulator. An old man tapped with his stick everything that lay in his path, pebbles, leaves, cigar ends, and flicked them angrily to the side of the road.

A few days more and we'll be gone. I'll not see all this again for years, perhaps never. There's no reason to stay, unless . . . Nonsense. We will go away. The middle of next week at the latest.

He went back into the room impatiently and searched for the timetable. We will go away. A long trip—not like Joli's when she went to Hatvan and refused to leave the train for another half-hour. Hysterical. The timetable was gone. He looked at his watch, lit a cigarette, swallowed another glass of brandy, and put on his hat. Between twelve and half-past 11a would be at the confectioner's. He went out of the hotel and around to the promenade. It's hot. Why should I leave a penny of my money in Budapest? No, I'm going away.

He found 11a and Edith Glynn. "Well, what happened?" 11a asked eagerly.

"I'll tell you about it later. It doesn't sound like a bad idea."

After lunch he telephoned to Abbott in London. Young Scott always sent a report by week-end cable from South Africa, and Kadar telephoned to London once a week anyway.

"Any news? How is Mrs Abbott? Good. I've just

had an interesting proposition from an old acquaintance of mine. What would you say if I bought some property here, really cheap? Build on it eventually." He knew what Abbott would say.

"How can I tell from here? If you think it's good business, investigate it, and we can talk it over next time you phone."

Joli did not telephone the next day, and when, at Ila's insistence, he finally wrote to the Swiss hotels, he knew definitely that the letters were going for no purpose. I'm bluffing with Kalotay; I know perfectly well that in the end I won't do business with him. The question—and he thought it over coldly and quietly—is whether I can bluff it out with Ila too. She knows too much about business to be fooled. Everything depends on whether or not she insists on knowing what Kalotay's scheme is. He made up his mind what he would say to lead Kalotay on, and what he would say to Ila: Lately I've felt a curious sense of duty towards the town, and besides the business looks profitable.

It took a day or two for him to soothe his conscience and break down his own resistance, before he confessed to himself that he was staying on account of Joli. Why should I stay on her account? What do I want of her? Difficult question, but he could avoid it by the simple answer: Nothing. She is a nice child who deserves more than she has. I'd like to help her somehow and in such a way that she would not know. Perhaps through her brother.

Joli did not telephone, but he was no longer restless. Plenty of time. And he began negotiations with Kalotay. Poor Kalotay! He took me for a fool and wanted to get the better of me. He deserves what he will get.

Once at school he swapped five shiny pen points for my indiarubber. Afterwards I found out that they were old nibs that he had washed clean. Poor Kalotay—he has it coming to him.

It was not necessary to lead him on. He was off and could not be stopped. In the course of the weeks that followed, he prepared mountains of calculations, tables, statistics. They went to see shabby tenement houses in the slums, silent factories. In a poverty-stricken, dusty little suburb Kalotay exclaimed: "This is where we ought to build a Hungarian Helena Village."

Kalotay deserved what was coming to him. For a month he stuck to Kadar like a leech. He never tired of thinking up new ideas in the hope that one of them would be snapped up. He invented complicated schemes that anybody but a half-wit would have seen through. Sometimes Kadar could not make up his mind whether Kalotay took him for a complete idiot, or whether Kalotay was himself such a blind fool. At first, when a new Kalotay idea appeared, he wanted nothing so much as to kick the babbling, conceited, sweating little man, and shut the door forever on him and his boasts. But, finally, he got used to it all. He acquired the art of pretending to listen. Half-an-hour a day with him doesn't hurt me. But sometimes he detested the game, and longed to confess to Ila.

The comedy went on. Either Kalotay had not held his tongue, or the others had good noses. Anyway, they began to appear on the scene. Faces turned up in the hotel lounge, eyes staring expectantly; voices sounded on the telephone. Some of them he remembered from the party on the Island, some, with difficulty, from his school days. Almost every week brought a new

scheme. At first they were a good excuse for staying on; later he was bored and gave frigid refusals. Marton turned up with an obscure tale about a private bank that needed further capital. The slovenly, bow-legged Weiss, who looked like a pedlar, offered to arrange some contract. Amman came with cool, correct speech, with the glamour of political connections, international wire-pulling. "I don't know whether a title or a decoration would be of any interest to you, but an honorary consulship seems unavoidable if you could carry out this scheme. Moreover, there are the material advantages, of course." Simon appeared without any definite suggestion, but saying again and again that he was the man who could be used at any time, anywhere, and for anything. He mentioned that during his last trip to Transylvania he happened to see the graves of Kadar's parents at Torda. He would have to be there again very soon, and if by any chance Kadar would care to go with him. . . .

Then Salgo, almost in rags, babbled about sanitary and medical conditions in South Africa, a bitter, fanatical light in his eyes as he spoke incoherently of Hungarian Christendom humiliating itself before Judaism, and neglecting its best warriors. One day Rona caught him in the street and dragged him to the shop to see the set of china that had once belonged to a noble family. Others came, some directly, some with letters of introduction, half-forgotten friends of the past, strangers who referred to mutual friends, to cousins, to some previous meeting. Carefully worded, obscure speeches; complicated, fantastic schemes; flimsy possibilities, conjectures, probabilities—all of them were aimed at some unique chance to make money—if a certain amount of capital were available. They all had faith that money is a magnetic power

which attracts money, conjures it out of the air, hungers after more money, creates money out of itself, yearns to be fruitful and reproductive. They never asked for anything, never begged—not out of shame, but because they hoped to get more if they kept from showing how much they wanted to get something.

There was only one frank and honest creature in the whole lot—a thin, blonde dancing girl whom he met at a cabaret one night. She raised her long, thick lashes with angelic straightforwardness, and said: “Are you the terribly rich man with a lot of houses? . . . Then I think you might spare the price of one for me.”

Ily was apparently contented, and after a while said nothing about leaving. She seemed to be perfectly happy with the Glynns, except when the business schemes came up, when he tried to explain that certain things were worth going into—and then she never opposed him, but her eyebrows drew together, and a sharp wrinkle appeared on her forehead. More and more he thought: Impossible that she doesn’t know what is going on, but why doesn’t she say something? He watched her carefully, anxiously. Could he see a change in her? Had anything come between them? She knows about Joli, he thought once. But she said nothing. Very well, then, I can keep still, too.

For days he did not ride in the afternoon. While Ila slept, he lay on the sofa, read, or went over his papers. Every morning they played tennis with the Glynns on the Island. The days went by, pleasant, leisurely summer days, full of a formless expectation. He was calm and happy; he trusted in time and silence. She will be my mistress whenever I want her. He laughed. I don’t really want her. She is not even pretty. And if Ila

knows about Joli? Knows what? That I think about her, and like to be with her, and enquire about her from her brother?

But he was disturbed, now that he admitted thinking about her. He knew that he thought about her all the time—and that it would be better to go away.

One day he met Joli in the street: "Hello, Joli. We haven't seen you for a long time. What have you been doing?" Funny that this morning I felt I would meet her, and now I'm not particularly glad.

"Yes. It's really my fault. Your wife was so nice about asking me to call."

"Well, it wasn't nice of you to forget us." He could think of nothing else to say.

"Where are you going now?" she asked with sudden eagerness. "Walk a little with me if you're not in a hurry. I want to buy a ribbon for a hat, and I know a place where I get things very cheap."

They walked along, talking about trifles. Her step was elastic, and yet there was something a little rigid about her.

"I used to know a girl in Vienna, a long time ago," he said suddenly. "She looked very much like you—the same color hair. And I was very fond of her."

"And since then you've had enough of red-haired girls." Joli gave a sharp little laugh.

He looked at her, and tried to think of a swift, decisive answer.

"No, don't be cross with me," her voice had a touch of ironic apology. "Probably she was very nice."

She is so like Tilly and yet so different. Their voices are the same—but Tilly had a thousand voices. I've scarcely spoken a hundred sentences to Joli. Do I like

her? An old memory flashed through his mind: After some childish, furious quarrel, Tilly lay exhausted on the bed, stubbornly staring into space, while he knelt beside her. "You see, you threatened to leave me," she said quietly into the air. "Now here you are. You can never leave me. Some day we will be separated, but I shall still be with you. I shall be in you. You can't get rid of me." The voice haunted him. It was the most terrible of Tilly's thousand voices—a dead voice, living.

"Are you angry with me?" Joli broke the silence. "I swear I didn't mean anything. You're such a queer man."

"Queer? How?"

"So quiet. But I like you for not talking. The other night you hardly said anything. I hate people who talk a lot, like that awful Simon. You're not like anyone else—the youngsters I play around with. And I like you for being different. The other night, when you were so quiet, I felt as if I'd known you for a long time. . . . I say! I'm giving myself away. Tell me you're not angry about what I said."

"Of course I'm not." With an awkward movement he took her arm and gripped it above the wrist.

"No, don't." Joli pulled away from him. A man with a straw hat and a monocle looked at them curiously. Kadar hated him. And Joli, as if she read his thoughts, said pleasantly: "We're quits now, aren't we?"

"You strange little thing." They went on in silence.

"Here we are." She stopped at a shop. "Are you coming in with me, or will you wait outside? Or are you in a hurry?" A minute later she was back, a small paper parcel dangling from her finger.

"You know, I'd make a splendid guide for foreigners." She was gay now. "Do you see that store over there? That's where you get the worst silk and pay the most for it. . . . There's the kind of car I'd like to have if I knew what it is called. . . . This is where I buy phonograph records, when I can afford them. They don't mind if I listen to dozens before I choose one." She laughed, and he laughed with her.

"Yes, you would make a splendid guide."

"Even if I am a little crazy?"

"I like you as you are." If I said to her now: Joli, I'd like you to have everything you want—the best things in the world? . . .

A good-looking, bare-headed young man in a white suit came towards them. When Joli waved to him, he stopped and blinked behind his large, horn-rimmed spectacles. He was one of the boys in evening dress who had come to the American Bar with her that first night on the Island.

"Hello, Toto. What are you doing here?" She introduced them. "This is Dr. Otto Arany, Mr Antal Kadar. He's Andi's friend you know, Toto. . . . Own up, what are you doing in town this time of day?"

"Believe it or not, darling, I had to go to a consultation."

"I'll never believe it. Will you come with us?" The three walked on.

Darling. Comrades? A dull bitterness choked him, and he was almost sullen when the youngster left them at the next corner.

"Who was that man?" he asked, finally.

"Don't be so stern." Joli teased. "He's not a man, he's a boy. Aside from that, he's a doctor. Not a very

famous doctor, but he's only just started, and he's getting on. He's a skin specialist," she added, a little proudly, "and he's nice. He's got brains. Which way are you going now? I must go home."

Ila was not in when he reached the hotel. He paced up and down the room. She isn't pretty—something common in her face and mouth. It's hot. He undressed and put on his pajamas. What day is it? Wednesday. Nothing planned this afternoon. Good. Hotel room. Funny to decide all of a sudden to live half-a-year in an hotel room. A pleasant place to live. The telephone gave a subdued buzz. Kelemen: "How are you? I'd like to have a word with you one of these days . . . maybe this afternoon?" No, he would rather not, terribly busy the whole day, but to-morrow afternoon? While Ila was resting they could talk.

Kelemen. Kelemen was the least obtrusive of the lot. It almost seemed as he wanted nothing at all, but without any doubt he did want something. Every now and then an intonation of his voice or a broken-off sentence made it plain that he had something up his sleeve, and sooner or later he would come out with it. Kelemen was the most patient and cautious of them all. Probably because he wanted more than the rest. Well, why shouldn't he? Don't I expect a great deal of him? . . .

Replacing the receiver, he lay down again on the sofa. Now it was quite logical and inevitable that he should think of Joli. Who is that young man with the round spectacles? A youngster—twenty-five or six, certainly not more. I am thirty-two. Six years' difference—in my favour? Joli seems to like him. He took her arm and she did not pull herself away. Wouldn't it be funny if I began to be jealous? Priceless. "Priceless," he

repeated aloud, because his eyelids felt heavy, and he did not want to doze off.

When Ila came, he woke from a light sleep. She was gay and full of news . . . "The pool was divine to-day; two new English families have arrived at the Gellert Hotel. The water was marvellous, and such a sun! Look how sunburnt my back is."

While she talked, he considered whether or not to mention Joli. Why not? "I ran across Joli Kelemen in the street this morning," he interrupted. "She asked whether we couldn't go somewhere together again."

"And what did you tell her?"

"That we would like to, and that she should ring you up here."

"Good. I like her . . . What was I saying? Oh yes, I never saw anyone so funny as this new English woman . . ."

When he went the next day with Kelemen to a café terrace, he began with an invitation for dinner at the hotel: "The roof garden or anywhere else that Joli and Ila decide." Kelemen, of course, accepted.

They talked generalities, but behind Kelemen's cautious questions there seemed to be a strain. He hoped they were having a good time. How long would they stay? Kadar did not know exactly; they thought they might go on to Switzerland—he looked sharply at Kelemen—as soon as some propositions of Kalotay's had been investigated. Kelemen's face showed no surprise—only the cigarette and the match vibrated slightly in his hands.

"So . . . Kalotay has some propositions. I hope they are good ones." . . . Then suddenly he began to speak of himself. Calm and collected. He talked of his affairs,

which, God knew, were not very rosy. The firm was dilly-dallying with the idea he had mentioned the other day, but was non-committal. If they refused, he would be free to offer it to another transport agency, but now he did not know where he was. The greatest trouble was the departmental manager, an old man, jealous and afraid of losing his job. Kelemen had got where he was now on his own merits, but there was no one to protect him against the old man's intrigues. "I wouldn't be surprised if out of a clear sky I should get notice to quit." It was hard to get any sort of job these days, let alone one where you have a chance to show your abilities . . . He changed the subject to South Africa. "Tell me, Kadar, what sort of people work for you?"

"Oh, excellent men, experts. Specialists in their own way."

"Excellent, yes—but are they . . . reliable?"

Kadar looked at him in astonishment. "You mean, do they rob the cash-box?"

"No, I mean, couldn't your buyer, for instance, make private commissions for himself on the sly?"

"I see—couldn't he be bribed by the contractors or give an unfair advantage to some of them who paid him a secret commission? . . . It wouldn't be entirely impossible, but not very likely. It's hard to explain, because you don't know how things are organized there, but if one of our staff could be bribed, we would discover it within twenty-four hours."

"I see." Kelemen was somewhat embarrassed. He seemed to regret the question. "I am sure you have only trustworthy people." They went on talking, but the conversation was colorless, dull, with empty generalities. Then Kelemen found another question: "If you won't

think it idle curiosity, will you tell me how you made your fortune? I'd be enormously interested."

"How I made it? . . . It would be difficult to tell you exactly." Banalities were on the tip of his tongue: I struggled hard . . . But he suppressed them. "It was partly good luck that got me . . ." Got me where? To the place where at thirty-two I have money and my own business, a name for myself, and a certain amount of power. And here I sit with a sad, uninteresting, hungry stranger, one of a million poor, uninteresting slaves. Why? Because I want to see Joli again. Stubbornly he began to talk of Joli.

"What does she do all day long? Has she any plans for the future? Wouldn't she like a job such as most girls have?" Kelemen replied carefully and with reserve, giving brief answers strictly to the point. Scoundrel! You know I'm interested, but you won't give yourself away, and you'll hold out for your price. Two sharp looks crossed as the men stood up and shook hands. Obviously Kelemen was thinking of the dinner party, too.

Joli came to see Ila the next day, and he had a chance to see her.

"Your husband told me that you were kind enough to ask about me. I was near here, so I just ran in." He mentioned the dinner party. "No, Andi didn't say anything about it. But I haven't seen him for days." She sat in a low armchair. He noticed again how straight she held herself, yet there was nothing stiff about her. She lit a cigarette and crossed her legs—fine, slender long legs. He listened to the two of them talking. Something curiously similar in their voices, though their intonations were entirely different. Ila spoke quietly,

smoothly, in a deep tone, with well-chosen words. Joli's voice was quiet too, but higher pitched, and her words were a little rhapsodic. She left her sentences unfinished, interrupted herself, and went back to complete a phrase broken off in the middle. He watched Ila's face for a sign of disapproval or impatience, but he saw none. Joli was telling again what they had already heard twice or three times. "I learned shorthand and typing, but it didn't do me any good. What's the use of a job that doesn't pay enough for my bus fare, in a . . . say in a lawyer's office." A sympathetic smile passed over Ila's face. "Beginners never get paid much."

This can't really interest Ila, he thought. He wished Joli would stop talking of her dull problems. He could solve them in a minute if . . . The telephone interrupted.

"Hullo! Oh, it's you, Kalotay . . . That's all right. You're not disturbing me."

"And if you are lucky enough to get a job somewhere, you have to slave all day and don't earn enough to buy shoelaces."

"I'm sorry, it's not possible just now. We have visitors."

"Besides you have to put up with all sorts of unpleasant experiences."

"To-morrow is all right. Doesn't matter how early. Nine if you like."

"I had a job once in a textile house. The boss was an old man and very nice. He called me his little girl."

"No, I'd rather go with you the first time."

"After two weeks he asked me to go for a ride with him at night. Would I wait for him downstairs? Then I quit."

"Right. See you to-morrow. Good-bye."

Ila asked Joli to stay for dinner.

"I'm sorry, I can't to-night. My sister is going out, and I have to stay with the baby."

"What a shame. But we'll see you and your brother to-morrow night. If you can wait till I change, Toni and I will drive you home."

Joli sat in the low armchair. He stood leaning against the door-frame of the balcony and watched her. "Must you really stay with the baby to-night?" he asked suddenly in a low voice, and wondered angrily why he did not speak louder. No reason to whisper.

"Yes. I'm terribly sorry." Joli's voice was low, too—reflex. They were silent for a moment. Then again he heard his own strange, low voice:

"Will you go for a ride? But in the daytime, and all three of us—my wife and you and I."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Joli, loudly this time.

"Oh, nothing." He went to the desk, re-arranged papers, changed the position of the telephone, tried to hide his embarrassment. Her wide-open, green-blue eyes stared at him in surprise.

The dinner party was not to be. Ila went after breakfast to play tennis on the Island, and an hour later telephoned in distress from the Buda sanatorium. Edith Glynn had slipped on the damp grass of the court and had broken her right ankle. She suffered agonies while Ila drove her to the sanatorium. They were hunting now for an orthopaedic specialist. Captain Glynn was in Belgrade. "Toni, I'm desperate. Please jump into a taxi and come quickly."

A minute later he was on the way. Edith Glynn's face was very white as she lay in bed. The doctor arrived

soon after him—a smart, good-tempered young man, with black hair turning grey, and cheerful, re-assuring words. The X-ray showed that an operation was necessary, and Edith agreed to have the good-looking doctor do it at noon. She asked Kadar to telephone her husband of the accident without alarming him. He must not return before he had finished his work.

The operation was successful, and Kadar telephoned Belgrade. Glynn wanted to come at once by the afternoon plane, but Kadar and the doctor succeeded in dissuading him. Everything was all right. Edith was in no danger whatever, and Ila would stay with her all the time.

For the first three nights Ila slept at the sanatorium, and spent most of the day helping the nurse. After the operation, Kadar lunched by himself at the hotel and then went upstairs to his room. He remembered the dinner party. I'll have to call it off. How shall I do it? Write a note to Kelemen or to Joli, or drive round to Joli's house and tell her? He telephoned the sanatorium and asked Ila's opinion. She answered a little curtly: "Of course we can't go to-night. At least I can't. But you can go, naturally."

"No, I won't go without you." He wrote to Joli and Kelemen on visiting cards, asking Kelemen to call the next morning. The notes went off by a messenger boy. Later he rang up Kalotay and arranged a meeting for the next day.

Towards six o'clock he drove again to the sanatorium. Edith was in pain, and Ila was excited and short tempered. Back in his room he did not know what to do with himself. He took the timetable out of the desk, re-read the latest cables from South Africa, watched the

evening crowds from the balcony. At nine he went to the restaurant, swallowed a few mouthfuls without any appetite, and went up to bed. The night was hot, enervating. He was drowsy, but could not sleep. There is no reason why I should not have gone out with Joli and her brother. In a childish attempt to justify himself he repeated over and over that Ila would not have objected. It was nearly three o'clock before he fell asleep.

His interview with Kalotay the next morning was short. "Unfortunately I have not had time to read your notes, but I hope to go over them in the next few days, and then we can go out together and have a look at things." Kalotay swallowed his disappointment and indignation, and went away with a smile on his face.

Then came Kelemen, and it was this morning that he played—there is no other word for it—a dirty trick on him. It was only a few words, a vague, concealed encouragement, but Kelemen, like a dry and greedy sponge, drank up the poison. In the course of their conversation, while both of them avoided the issues that interested them most and waited for the other to start, Kadar remarked, quite casually, that things were so much better in South Africa. Ambition and ability had a chance there, especially if someone lent a hand. Kadar changed the subject, but he saw that Kelemen's tired face brightened, and in his gloomy eyes a light flamed up. Later he remarked: "A man never ought to lose his self-confidence. Call it a fixed idea, call it self-deception, but you have to convince yourself that something better will turn up. The only thing you have to know is whom to ask and what to ask for."

Now was Kelemen's chance. Each of them knew precisely what he expected from the other, and what he

could give. But Kelemen remained silent. He wants me to speak first, Kadar thought, annoyed. He saw the deep glitter in Kelemen's eyes. You'll have to speak up. I know your tactics too well, this silence, this reserve. They sat facing one another over glasses of brandy in the thick smoke of cigarettes. He saw himself in a London hotel room, opposite the woman with bright black eyes and black hair. He remembered how he controlled himself up to the last minute, when he was on the brink of giving everything away and confessing that he was at the end of his rope; how he had killed the beggar in himself.

He wants a great deal. Good—so do I. No further mention was made of South Africa, nor of Joli.

At noon he went to the sanatorium. He did not see Edith, for she was asleep, but he spoke to Ila in the reception room. Edith had had a high temperature the night before, and was in pain all the time. Glynn had telephoned, and would be back in a day or two. A tall, stout nurse passed through the reception room. She stopped in the doorway for a moment, looked at them, and went on. As he was leaving he met the nurse again in the corridor.

"Good-morning," she said, pleasantly, and hesitated whether to stop or not.

"Good-morning," he replied, and went out. How long will it take Edith to get well?

He lunched at the swimming pool, lay in the sun all afternoon, then returned to the sanatorium. "I may dine out somewhere," he said to Ila as he left. In the vestibule he met the nurse again. She smiled and came up to him.

"Good-evening, Mr Kadar," she said. "Don't you remember me?"

The smile, the big dark eyes, the broad face with its regular features.

"Of course, Agota!" he said, vaguely embarrassed, and he held out his hand.

"Wasn't it queer that the English lady was here and you had to come and see her. Would you believe it? I recognized you when you came this morning, Mr Kadar. Lord! how long is it since I saw you! How have you been, and what brought you back to Budapest? You haven't been here since those days, have you?"

Her face had the same expression, the same lines, broader and deeper, the same shining, tranquil eyes, the same quiet voice that he had heard change from laughter to ecstasy, to sobs.

"And the other lady, the Hungarian lady, she's your wife, isn't she? She's sweet. Wouldn't I like to hear all you've been doing all this long time! Do you have to go? I'll just walk down the stairs with you."

Agota walked with him, and for three minutes poured out questions and exclamations. "Well, I never! Do you really live in Africa? And you're doing fine, aren't you? I can see that. It's no use asking if you are happy with that pretty wife. Was she a Budapest girl? And what about your children? Not yet? Well, I never! What a shame. But there's plenty of time." Then she spoke of herself. "We've no reason to complain, thank God. My husband is first clerk here in the office. I married him four years ago, when I was promoted to be matron. We get on, and I hope we never do worse . . . knock on wood."

A pleasant, cheerful feeling came over him as he looked at her—the bright, care-free health of this woman who cared for the sick. They reached the gate and shook

hands—the same firm, friendly grip. Her eyes shone. She opened the blouse at her white, round neck, and drew out a thin gold chain with a four-leafed clover strung on it. “I’ve still got this. I’ll always keep it. It brought me luck, thank God.”

Happy, buxom, contented, he thought. Eleven years. She is married and fat; the clover brought her luck. He drove slowly through the tunnel and across the bridge. It was seven o’clock when he reached the hotel. She was the first woman who . . . with whom . . . and he saw again the thin chain and the clover around the slender young neck. With a sort of childish curiosity he tried to remember more: he felt her long white hands, the slim lithe body, the mass of black hair. He saw her in the brown dress, in the blue uniform, the phosphorescent whiteness of her body in the darkness. The picture trembled and began to fade; the colors changed, the shapes were transformed. Dark hair dissolved into a mysterious blondness, then became red—a deep, glowing crimson. The face, the nose, the mouth, the arches of eyebrows, the curve of shoulder and breasts changed. They belonged to an imaginary woman who was strange yet familiar in every variation. He shut his eyes and tried to forget the hundred-faced, hundred-bodied vision.

Leaving the car outside the hotel, he walked towards the Andrassy Avenue. I ought to have dinner and go to bed—but some magnetic power forced him on. He was a complicated and ingenious machine of many purposes, moved only by impulses from an outside source. His thinking ceased; his senses perceived things and sounds in a vague but pleasant distortion. The sky was blue and cloudless. The warm twilight spread slowly. People on the avenue—summer evening people, leisurely,

care-free. Good-looking women, handsome men. He felt something melt in him—hardness, determination, fight.

With the eager and curious eyes of a boy he stared into the world. Voices came to his ears, laughter, shreds of words, radio music from an open window. Women's eyes met his. When he reached the Octagon he stopped for a few minutes in front of a café terrace. Smell of coffee and of bread. Newspaper headlines monotonously repeated at the corner. The blare of motor horns, the rattle of streetcars, the thunder of buses. He turned into the Boulevard. Walls of people, chains of people, everywhere; a precious, sheltering forest of people. White hats, fancy little caps, many-colored dresses; legs in white or flesh-colored stockings, long, slender and youthful; fresh and provocative little breasts concealed under loose dresses or tight blouses, insincerely hidden or openly inviting.

The unknown power forced him on—out of himself. Things sank away—buildings and towers, ships and railroads, money and work, sank into a relentless flood, out of which he himself rose into the Budapest night, white and clear, and naked as a statue. Fourteen years of pain and laughter, defeat and success, fourteen years of life and sleep and death and dreams were under his feet. Above him the endless certainty of the sky, around him the trivial moments of a fleeting present, behind him the forgotten, wanton, and misused success; before him the nameless something that would still the sweet and painful craving that possessed him.

He marched on through the whirlpool of people and things, in a witches' dance of noise and color. Memories rushed past him on bat's wings. Forebodings stirred his blood into alarm. His ears conjured up music—a

military march, the pathetic movement of a symphony, gipsy melody, music-hall tunes from a mechanical piano, a thin chord played on a beggar's violin. Human voices singly : a song, laughter, a scream, a prolonged whistle ; and above them all the overpowering, meaningless roar of jostling, prowling, elbowing humanity. They knocked into him, they swept him aside, they invited him, they cursed him. He did not mind in the least. There was something joyous in everything—invitations, reproaches, entreaties, threats. He smiled and smiled. Darkness deepened ; noises quieted down ; lights blinked at the awkward shadows of couples on benches. Tranquility—the smell of evening, of dust, of flowers, and of grass

He found himself walking down a quiet by-street. Great private houses, peaceful and dark, behind wide gardens. Silence—then a faint melody came from the distance. He stopped to listen, and went on towards the source of the sound. A piano—clear, sharp music. He crossed the road, almost running, to an iron railing. The sound came from that house ; music played by the hands of a virtuoso came from the open, lighted window in crystal-clear tones. He tried to open the gate, but the handle would not give. Climbing on to the stone parapet nearest the window, he looked into the room from which the music came. Was it Tilly's piano, and a slender girl with narrow, white shoulders, auburn hair, and white hands ? Near the window stood an upright piano, its centre part faced with glass. In front of it sat a fat, bald little man in a smoking jacket. His hands made queer, stiff movements on two little handles, while his body swayed rhythmically. His feet trod the pedals of the machine. Perfect music from a great artist's hands repeated by a perfect machine. Near the piano in a

wheel chair sat a young boy with pale cheeks, closed eyes, and drooping head, his legs covered with a blanket.

The dream, the vague and turbulent dream, was over, the spell broken. For some moments he stood on the parapet, holding to the railing, staring through the lighted window; then, cautiously, he descended to the pavement. I love her, he said quietly to himself. He hesitated for another instant before he walked away.

At the street crossing he took a taxi. I wasn't myself. It was a childish, silly mood; he hunted for scornful words . . . or maybe I am ill . . . that was the word! I am poisoned—and the poison's name is Joli. Joli, the woman with red coils of hair over her ears, with ghostly white skin and blue-green eyes, and a homely mouth; Joli, with her slim body and slender legs, and dull, middle-class life. I am in love with her. I am like a man who stands by the window watching the rain for hours, and suddenly exclaims in surprise: It's raining. Horrible! I, Ila's husband, am in love with a little red-headed girl. Bitter, humiliating. But a simple fact: I love Joli. It was a pleasant, warm feeling.

Ila had never asked him about the past. Their relationship began and ended with the present. What of the past? Ila accepted him as he was. She is four years older than I. She lives for me, and has no desire but to be with me.

When he first went unasked to her stateroom on the *Falconia*, she was waiting for him. At Port Elizabeth she was his mistress, and did not care if everyone knew it. He did not want to marry her till he had made his own way, and Ila waited for him. Sometimes, when he was not with her, he felt that she was still waiting. And now I will deceive her again. I will be unfaithful again.

Just as he had been unfaithful at the beginning of the second year, before they were married—in Johannesburg, with the rector's daughter. And again with the Swedish dancer he went to see once a month in the Transvaal for half-a-year. And with Isabel, the secretary, who finally married Garnett. And with Mrs Astfield, who fell into his arms in an hysterical fit and threatened him with a revolver when he finally left her. I cannot resist desire. I cannot be faithful. And now I want Joli. I will have her, and deceive Ila once more.

He started up suddenly from the chair in which he had been sitting for a long time, and turned on the light—clean, cleansing light. He felt very hungry; he had had nothing to eat since noon. It was midnight when he left the restaurant and went out on the embankment. The smell of the water came up from the river—cool, refreshing. Not at all dangerous, he said aloud to himself, and looked around to see if anyone had heard. There is no danger in it, he repeated silently, and it gave him confidence. There was no danger. Joli is a fresh, pretty little thing, twenty years old, but I must not take the whole thing too seriously. It's all right if I don't take it too seriously.

It was as if Ila had not been in Budapest at all during these days. She spent her whole time with Edith Glynn, and would not dream of leaving her. It was natural that, so far from home, an acquaintance should become a close friend; but Kadar felt that behind Ila's attachment to Edith was a desire for protection, and a sort of helplessness. In Africa, Ila had just as few real friends as he had. Their circle was made up of business associates, partners at games, people of their own class whom they liked without becoming intimate with any of them. But here

the closest sort of friendship had sprung up in a few weeks. And it seemed to him that Ila was seeking protection. Protection against what? Against strange surroundings? Against a foreign city? He thought he understood it—he had lived for years in Budapest, his old friends called on him, any street or house might have some significance for him, something that no one else could know without being told, something that no one else could understand. But Ila had never been in Budapest before.

She spent most of her time at the hospital, even after Captain Glynn's return, and it was only when Edith was much better that Ila would go with him to the swimming pool in the mornings. Afterwards, she would return to the hospital. Sometimes he went with her, stopped for half an hour, and called for her in the evening. He spent his afternoons in the cool, darkened room, thinking of Joli; or if it were not too hot, driving around the city, hoping to meet her. And sometimes he did meet her. His conscience hurt him occasionally, when he realized that for hours he had done nothing but think of her, that, as he wandered up and down the streets, he had no purpose but to meet her. I am thirty-two years old, and I act as if I were fifteen. But he had to admit that it was good to think of Joli, to hunt for Joli—almost as exciting as being with her. I am preparing for—what? Have I so much time to spare? Yes, all the time I want. But, perhaps, I am running myself into a corner . . . I don't dare. . . . He tried to fight it out with himself in the afternoons when he was alone, and at night when he could not sleep. But he did not know what was truth and what was lies.

Joli spent two mornings with them at the swimming

pool, and he met her now and then in the afternoons by chance. He made a mental note when she mentioned casually where she would be the next afternoon, and took care to be there at the right time. And so they met—by chance.

Once he noticed Ila looking hard for a long time at Joli's face. Does she suspect? She didn't know about the Swedish girl, Inge, when I was away in the Transvaal, but this time she must know. Know what? There isn't anything I can't tell her. But it was a lie that deepened with each chance meeting with Joli of which he neglected to tell Ila.

There was not much variety in their conversation during those meetings, when they walked or rode for an hour or so; and Joli did most of the talking. He listened to her voice, watched her face, her figure, her movements. I am preparing to—and sometimes he touched her arm. He listened to Joli's chatter; her revolt against the stifling dullness of middle-class life in a three-room apartment; against cheap, monotonous pastimes; her longing for things that were beautiful, and worth-while, and interesting. And when she spoke of herself, her voice was merciless, honest, relentlessly self-critical. What do I want of her? What do I care how she lives?

"I meant to tell you yesterday," said Joli one afternoon. "But then I didn't.

"Tell me what?"

"I am going away on Saturday."

"Really? Where? For how long?"

"Not for long. Only a week. I didn't want to go, but the others talked me into it."

"Where are you going?" he asked in a dull voice.

"You'll laugh when I tell you. Eight of us are going by

steamer to Vienna, with collapsible boats, and we'll row back all the way. If it's good weather, we'll camp out."

"So," he said, after a silence. "Eight of you. Four couples I suppose?"

Joli turned her head slowly and looked into his face. "Yes. Why not? Have you any objection?"

"None whatever . . . Is Dr. Arany going?"

"Oh, yes. Of course." They walked on in silence for a long time. "After all, a week isn't very much," she said at last. "What I really wanted to know is, will you be here when I get back?"

"I think so. I'm not sure."

"I see." And then suddenly, in a strange, deep voice, she asked: "Tell me, shall I . . . not go?"

Now—now she is offering herself. This is what I have been waiting for. Now to reach out for her, to take her. Awkwardly, helplessly, he answered with a deep breath: "It's hard for me . . . you . . . you ought to know best, Joli."

Towards the middle of the next week a postcard came from Vienna, the photograph of four girls and four young men, leaning against a steamer's gunwale. "We have had our picture taken," wrote Joli, in a thin, slanting hand. The weather was fine, and she was starting downstream the next morning, and she hoped to see them when she got home. Joli stood at the left of the group, smiling and looking straight into the camera. Next to her was Arany. Disagreeable pup! No, not at all. He was not disagreeable. Good, high forehead, handsome face, intelligent eyes. Joli's sweetheart. The idea filled him with a sudden grey misery as he handed the postcard with the rest of the mail for Ila. I am deceiving Ila, while Joli is deceiving Arany. She was deceiving him when she

said in that strange, deep voice the other day : Tell me, shall I . . . not go ?

Ila came from her room. "Of course we'll be here," she said as if replying to the postcard which she handed back to him. "Here you are. Put it away. Isn't she sweet ?"

He put the picture into his wallet and did not look at it again. But Arany haunted him every night. We ought to go away—to St. Moritz, anywhere away from Budapest and Joli and Kelemen and Kalotay and Vavrinetz, whom he had met this week. Vavrinetz was sauntering along the embankment, looking up at the hotel windows as Kadar stood on the balcony. Vavrinetz ! He recognized him, and the blood rushed into his face. He leaped back from the balcony, and for a moment thought of running down into the street. He could catch him if he hurried. But Vavrinetz might have gone into a building or boarded a streetcar, or it might not have been Vavrinetz after all.

It was a little before six when he left the hotel, and there at the door stood Vavrinetz. Of course, he had been waiting—he had lain in ambush.

"Vavrinetz !" Kadar exclaimed, and the two stood facing one another. "I noticed you some time ago on the embankment. Do you want to see me ?"

"Oh, how do you do, Kadar ?" Vavrinetz reached out a hand hesitatingly and then dropped it. Neither his face nor his voice had changed. "No, I just happened to be here. The office isn't open in the afternoon, and I'm very seldom in town at this hour."

"Of course," said Kadar, slowly. "Naturally. You live in Old Buda in the house with a garden, which you got back after the fall of the bolshevik régime."

"Yes . . ." Vavrinetz opened his eyes wide. "How did you know?"

"Don't you remember? I'm surprised. You told me yourself in the afternoon of the twenty-fourth of June, 1919."

Vavrinetz's tanned face became a shade paler. "I must say you've got a splendid memory."

"Oh, yes. My memory is quite good."

A few moments of silence. "I'm going to Buda to meet my wife, but I have a little time. Would you like to come with me for a walk?"

As they went along together, Kadar forced himself to speak. "Well, Vavrinetz, we haven't seen each other for a long time. Tell me about yourself. What have you been doing all these years?"

Vavrinetz blinked suspiciously into Kadar's face. "I am still alive, thank you," he answered. Then, cheerfully: "Vegetating like all the other poor devils."

"Yes, but what do you do for a living?"

Vavrinetz began to talk. His voice grew less strained, and took on a tone that was familiar and plaintive. "I'm getting on slowly, very slowly." He was a plant engineer in a machine factory, expert on combustion engines; but at present he was assistant manager in the boiler shop. "But don't let's talk about it. When I realize that I am thirty-two years old . . ." When he paused between sentences he seemed to be nerving himself to say something, then lost heart each time and went on talking about the lousy factory, a moneyless existence, the entire hopeless, bloody country. "If one could get away, somewhere abroad, while one's still capable of hard work, before one collapses. . . ."

They came back to the hotel, and Kadar stood with one

foot on the running-board of the car. Then Vavrinetz, suddenly plucking up his courage, began: "You know, Kadar, I'd like to tell you something. Something that has worried me all these years. A misunderstanding, an unfortunate mistake . . ."

"Wait a minute, Vavrinetz," Kadar interrupted in a quiet, steady voice, "I haven't told you anything yet about myself. Listen to me. You may have heard that I own a building concern—a big, important one. I employ six architects and twenty-two clerks in my central office alone, and I provide bread for hundreds of employees. I have twenty-four motor trucks. And I am said to be worth a good deal of money. I could tell you that I am worth two million pounds, or three or ten—you would not understand how much that is. As a matter of fact, I have about a million, but a few millions here and there don't mean anything. I am a capitalist, a big capitalist . . . What was I going to say? Oh, yes—Thank you, Vavrinetz. Thank you for beating me and throwing me downstairs and kicking me out of the Academy. If it had not been for you, I, too, should very probably be a works engineer in Budapest." He opened the door of the car and sat down behind the steering wheel. "There were no regrettable misunderstandings and no unfortunate mistakes. I hold nothing against you. On the contrary, I am sincerely grateful to you." He stepped on the starter. The engine began to purr, but stopped, and he had to start it again. "The battery is weak. Never mind. It is only a hired car, but quite good enough. At home I have a Rolls-Royce. Well, good-bye, Vavrinetz." He waved, and put his foot on the accelerator. The car glided slowly away. He laughed to himself. Vavrinetz's face was yellow and his eyelids

trembled. Poor old Vavrinetz. I have no grudge against him.

A week went by, and they stayed on. Not a word was said about leaving until, in the third week of August, Ila and Edith set out for Switzerland by themselves.

A few days before they left, there was the incident on St. John's Mountain. In the last weeks there had been other incidents. First he was late for an appointment. It was not his fault—he had run across Amman and could not shake him off. "I am never late," said Joli, pointedly. She did not refer to it again, but that was the lateness incident. Then once he asked her: "What sort of fellow is Dr. Arany?" "Dr. Arany is one of my oldest friends, and you needn't sneer at him," she replied, sharply. He had no intention of sneering at him. Anyway, that was the Arany incident. There were altogether about ten such small unimportant things, most of them not worth a second thought. But the business about the flowers was more serious. He sent Joli a great bunch of white roses, anonymously, and without a message.

"You've sent me flowers," she said when he saw her next. "I want to say two things. First of all, one doesn't send flowers anonymously, except as a joke. But you're not the joking kind and neither am I. In the second place, does Ila know about it?"

He opened his eyes wide.

"Does she know about it?" Joli insisted.

"She does not," he replied calmly, "nor does she know that we are in the habit of meeting."

"Are we? We're not in the habit." Joli tightened her lips. "We meet occasionally by chance. But you can't send me flowers by chance."

"All right. Then you don't want me to send you any more flowers?"

"Not anonymously."

"And shan't we meet again?"

Joli did not answer at once, then she said quietly: "If I were you, I would say now—" and she imitated his voice—"It's hard for me . . . you . . . you ought to know best, Mr Kadar. As it is I can only say that I should like to see you now and then."

Then, as they were walking one evening, Joli said: "Tell me, I've often wanted to ask you, but somehow I hesitated . . ."

"Were you afraid?"

"It wasn't a question of being afraid . . . I'd like to know, if you don't mind telling me, how you and Ila first met?" He did not answer. "You're hesitating. You won't tell the truth then. Men either answer at once or else tell a lie."

"You haven't given me time to answer. You can't know whether I intended to, or what I would have said."

"You see? You are not going to answer."

"Why should it interest you?"

Joli looked at him. "You know who I am," she said quietly. "And I should like to know who Ila was when she was a girl." Silence. "All right," she said finally, and began to talk of something else. That was the Ila incident.

Then came the incident on St. John's Mountain. A few days before Ila left, they went with Kelemen and Joli for dinner at the pleasant little restaurant on the top of the mountain. Ila felt like champagne, and they had a good deal of it. It was past midnight when they started to walk downhill, the innkeeper's chauffeur driving the

car ahead of them on the steep, difficult dark road. Ila and Kelemen walked in front. Yellow electric lights at long intervals deepened the darkness between. Suddenly Kadar stopped, and when Joli turned towards him in surprise, he seized her violently and drew her to him. Her hard little fists were set against his breast. It was an endless, breathless moment.

“Joli, I love you.”

“Let me go ! ”

“Joli, I’m mad about you.”

“Let me go ! Let me go ! ”

His arms drew her closer, the thin wrists gave way, and suddenly he felt the slim, rebellious little body against his. His feverish lips touched her hair, her forehead, her cheek ; then with a rough hand he took her chin and forced her head up until he could kiss her cold, tight-closed lips. Her slender body was light, unresisting, in his arms ; her hands rested open and limp against his breast ; her eyes half-closed, tired and sorrowful, but her lips—the blood-red strip of her mouth—remained cold. He let her go. They walked in silence behind the two distant shadows.

“Are you happy now ? ” Joli said at last, as if she were speaking to herself, in a bitter, sarcastic, scornful voice. “My wrist hurts.” He did not answer. Joli began again, quietly but aggressively. “There’s no sense in it—big words, but I don’t believe you. It’s senseless.”

“Joli, I do love you, and I want you ! ”

“Yes, I know—‘I want you and I will have you.’ I know, I know,” said Joli, with malicious calm. “And then—‘I’ve had you, that’s enough, thank you.’ Aren’t you going to offer me money ? ” She stopped, and her blue-green eyes burned. Neither of them spoke another

word. They caught up with the others, got into the car at the foot of the hill, and drove home in silence. When they left Joli and Kelemen, he saw that she had circles under her eyes, and felt how cold her hands were.

But now the struggle with himself was over. There was nothing left in him but his own words: "I love you, I want you."

Ila and Edith departed for Montreux. They decided suddenly, and the next day the tickets were bought. Ila asked him casually whether he wanted to go with them, and just as casually accepted his reply that he did not . . . "Business I'm looking into . . ." She did not even listen to his explanation: she knew that he would not leave.

"As a matter of fact, I don't mind going without you. Edith still isn't entirely over her operation, and we'll be better off alone." Slight bitterness in her voice, but he did not care. They agreed to telephone each other once a week, and she would come back with Edith to Budapest. At the station he kissed her—"Good-bye, dear." Then he drove Glynn to his office and rushed back to town. Joli would be on the Andrassy Avenue at five o'clock.

I love you. I want you . . . Eleven weeks followed in one mad whirl, in a wild, confused dream; eleven weeks before Ila returned to say good-bye to Budapest. Meanwhile he was aware that another week of those timeless days was gone, only when Ila telephoned. First from Montreux, then from Geneva, Venice, Padua, Rome. "It's marvellous," she said, "divine. I'm so sorry you aren't with us. Edith is almost well. What are you doing?"

"Oh, nothing extraordinary." Shame choked him as he said "Nothing extraordinary." But Ila did not want

details, and later she did not even ask "What are you doing?"

"Rome is wonderful. What a shame you can't be with us. We've seen Mussolini, and met Grandi at the Embassy, and a lot of other exciting people. We'll probably go to Sicily next week."

One night he woke with a start and sat up in bed, trembling with terror. Has something come between us, he asked aloud in the darkness. Are we estranged—on account of this—no, no unkind words. Budapest and Joli—they were inevitable, and they were over. The whole Budapest adventure was over. But no unkind words. A mad dream, those eleven weeks—and they left a bitter after-taste. A dream in which he went through the whole of his past and on to the end of time, in which he touched lightly the utmost vileness and the greatest good that had been or could ever be, in which he dragged himself through this sweet, painful love to the summit—then he woke up. His heart beat more slowly, he rubbed his eyes, yawned, and the whole thing was over.

Half an hour after Ila's departure he was walking with Joli.

"Has she gone?"

"Yes."

"And you? Why didn't you go with them?"

"You know the reason perfectly well."

"There is no reason," said Joli coolly.

No reason? If I were to seize you by the throat and strangle you . . . "I love you," he said.

"Thank you. You told me that before. 'I love you, I want you'—we needn't go into that again."

He looked at her and grinned. "You little beast."

"Yes, I know. That comes after I-love-you-I-want-you."

"Well then, why are you here with me? Why do you come when I call you? What do you want of me?" He turned on her gruffly.

"I can leave you any minute," she said, and walked away two paces; but she did not leave him.

He thought: Now I will see her every day. I will break down her resistance. But during the next six days he did not see her once. She did not telephone. On the third day he sent a note, asking her to call him, but she did not. On the afternoon of the fifth day he went to her house and rang the bell. A clumsy servant opened the door, and would not let him cross the threshold. "The mistress is asleep, the young lady isn't at home."

Furious, he went back down the steps. The next day passed, and Joli gave no sign. What can I do? Write again? Wait for her in the doorway? Yes, but with a revolver. He was frantic; he was on fire. God, how wonderful to be young! I am thirty-two years old. I could be twenty years old again if I wanted to be, he told himself, obstinately. I will hunt her down, I will win her, buy her. . . .

And Joli played with him. Joli was stronger than he. He came to the point where he ceased to demand, but only begged. The trouble was that during his whole life others had carried him, helped him, piloted him—towards money. And now he was alone, alone with the double-edged sword of money in his hand, spoiled by flattery, burning with desire for her; and against him was a girl, with all the innumerable feminine weapons in each cold, short, unconvincing "No" that she uttered. She was playing for high stakes, as he had played once. How

high? he wondered coldly, cynically. I'll pay her price anyway . . .

When Kelemen called on the sixth day, he asked at once: "Where is Joli?" The question was anxious, bare of all caution. Kelemen replied with a discreet smile, which meant that he fully understood the situation; and accepted the invitation for both of them to dinner the next night with a gesture which meant: You may rest assured, I know what you want. I'll hand Joli over to you.

Procurer, he thought. It would be better to speak out and offer him money . . . Am I crazy? Have I lost my senses completely?

The next night he heard Joli's cool, matter-of-fact voice: Yes, I got your message and I know you called—the maid told me—but I was very busy, and besides I wasn't in the mood to see anyone."

She lies, he thought, she lies when she speaks; and when she is silent it is to conceal something.

After that they met a great deal—almost every day. When he was not with her he felt more lonely than ever. He turned over and over in his mind the disappointing but never completely discouraging words she had spoken, and he lived only for their next meeting. Damn it! I'm poisoned. God, he thought once, with childish sulkiness, why have you forsaken me? He fought with mad dreams, flung impossible plans about. I will take her to Paris, and come to see her every year. I will give her money, quantities of money, so that she won't have any reason to be unfaithful. He laughed idiotically. No, I'll take her to Port Elizabeth as my secretary. Crazy! Or she can come there with her brother. They could live in Grahamstown or East London, and Ila would never find

out. And if she did . . . No, it would be safer to take her to Johannesburg, and see her once a month. Ila never found out about Inge. But how long would it last? Forever—fatuous word. When we get tired of each other I'll see that she has everything. . . .

He had touched the depths, the lowest depths. He talked nonsense to Kelemen about Port Elizabeth. About money. About possibilities and his own assistance. All this was aimed at Joli. Through a procurer. . . .

By this time Kelemen was idling about without a job. Kadar did not know whether he had been fired or whether he had given notice in anticipation of the future. Kelemen called every day, but he never asked for anything. The others. They still came with their feeble attempts to exploit him. He listened to all of them with an earnest, interested expression: "I can't promise anything. I'll have to consider it. I'm not sure whether I can do anything." And always he was shocked at the stupidity of their schemes, and at his own painful, ridiculous hypocrisy. I look like an idiot . . . Kalotay still kept telephoning with embittered obstinacy. But Marton had given up. Kelemen wrinkled his forehead when he heard about the others: "I warn you to be careful," he said once.

"Careful?" said Kadar, with disgust in his voice. "Do you think for a moment that I don't see through them, that I don't know what they are after? They're all fools. Even Vidor." For Vidor, the rich, elegant Vidor, had also joined the ranks. They met in the hotel diningroom. Vidor had become a bald-headed, stout, distinguished gentleman, immaculately dressed, the embodiment of conscious and well-applied prosperity. He came up to Kadar's table.

"Kadar! It's you. What luck finding you here. As a matter of fact, when I heard you were in Budapest, I thought that I should have the pleasure of seeing you without leaving it to chance. I expected you'd look me up, but I know you've been busy. If you don't mind, I'll join you for a minute until my guests arrive." He sat down. "I was extremely glad to hear all kinds of good reports about you from friends here and in London. I hear now that you are thinking of taking an interest in various Hungarian concerns. If that is true, I think I ought to remind you that the greatest precaution is advisable in the choice of associates. Our firm would be very glad to be at your disposal in banking matters. I'll count on having you come to see me at my office. Ah, I must leave you now—here come my French friends. I am very glad indeed to have seen you after all these years."

Yes, he answered, he would certainly call on Vidor when any of the deals went through. He would take advantage of his kind offer, and of the services of his bank, if only to open a deposit account, even if it had to be a very small one, as small as ten shillings, which was very little money, but it would be a beginning. . . .

Vidor's face turned a shade darker, a grim look flashed through the horn-rimmed spectacles, but his polite voice remained unchanged. Indeed, sometimes the smallest beginnings developed into the biggest enterprises. Even ten shillings might be regarded as capital—or as a symbol, let's say . . .

Kadar was exasperated. His attempt to humiliate Vidor had failed. By a tactful, courteous, perhaps even supercilious manner, he had warded off the thrust. Bad

taste. After all, when Vidor had offered him the ten shillings in London he had not meant to offend, and it was not his fault that Kadar wanted more.

This time Kadar wanted more—from Kelemen. And from Joli. Everything stopped there—at Joli Kelemen, who would not be his mistress. He lashed himself with questions: Doesn't she care for me? Is she in love with someone else? Does she want money? She can have anything she wants.

He turned coarse and called her vile names, flayed her with epithets; crying out wordlessly within himself his desire for her. When he talked to her he was clumsy, brazen, tactless, ridiculous. He spoke of money, and of his plans to make a grand lady of her.

"I can't understand myself," she said once. "If anyone else said such things to me, I'd have nothing to do with him."

He changed his tactics and began to beg. "I can't live without you. I'll go mad." He trembled and wanted to touch her, and hated himself.

Joli smiled. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself! A serious, grown-up man talking like that! No, I tell you, no."

He tried threats. "I'll go away and never see you again."

"I can't stop you," she retorted quietly.

"Do you hate me? Do you detest me?" he asked a hundred times.

"I won't answer that."

"Thank you. Now I know all I wanted to know."

"What do you know?"

"That you hate me. Be honest—do you?"

"I won't say."

Fall came. Ila telephoned from Rome. "We may return the middle of next week, but certainly not later than the week after. Is there any news?" She had not asked that for a long time.

"No."

"How about business?"

"Nothing new. I don't think anything will come of things here."

"Really? And the Kelemens? How is Joli?"

"All right, I believe. I see them now and then."

These last weeks had been insane. He was no longer sure of any of his feelings—anger and hate flared up in him. He pitied himself, he laughed at himself. He was at the end of his rope. This is the price of fifteen years of peace, fifteen years of success and pride.

One clear, warm Sunday morning towards the end of October, he drove Joli and Kelemen up Mount Gellert. His hands were unsteady on the steering wheel, and at a curve he almost ran over a couple walking arm-in-arm in the middle of the road. From the summit they looked down on the city, leaning over the iron railing. The sky was autumn blue, and a deep, tired misery was in his heart.

"We are going to leave soon," he said suddenly.

Kelemen looked at him, then at Joli. She lowered the large field-glasses through which she had been looking down into the valley.

"What is that tall building there with the green roof?" she asked. "I can't think what it can be."

They lingered a few minutes, then returned to the car, Kelemen hurrying ahead, Joli walking in front of Kadar. She had on low-heeled shoes, sports shoes. When she reached the car, Kelemen opened the door, and it

seemed as if he whispered something, leaning towards her.

"What?" said Joli, in a loud, sharp voice. "What did you say?"

"I asked where you would like to sit," he answered, and, without waiting for a reply, he sat down on the back seat.

"It's chilly. I wish I'd brought a coat," she said.

Kelemen was silent on the way home, but when they parted he said twice, very distinctly: "See you soon." Joli telephoned the next morning. She had nothing to do in the afternoon. Would he like to take her to a movie?"

"I don't mind," he replied slowly.

"Then I won't go, if you just don't mind."

But they went. In the movie Joli asked, "When are you leaving?"

"I don't know yet, exactly."

"And do you have to go?"

"Yes. We have been away from home too long already."

"And if I were to say . . ." she stopped abruptly.

"If you were to say what?" he asked in a choking voice.

"Nothing."

Later, in the street, she said, as if she were watching something interesting in the distance: "If you didn't have to leave, if it weren't absolutely necessary . . ."

For days he had tried to build a wall between himself and Joli, and now one unfinished sentence . . . and in the movie when he touched her hand she did not draw it away, but left it quietly in his . . . and now the wall was shattered, and his night was a sleepless hell. What does

she want? Simply to amuse herself? Play the fool with me? Hasn't she amused herself enough?

It was the next afternoon that Ila telephoned the last time from Rome. Soon afterwards Kelemen came with his usual "What's the news? How are you?"

"There's no news, except that I have a headache. I've just talked to my wife. She's coming back early next week. Very likely we shall leave soon after she gets here."

He lay down on the sofa. I have a headache. I've not had one for a long time. I detest headaches. Crazy, depressing, female thing to have. Will Ila want to stay on? Will she ask about those business propositions? She certainly will sooner or later. How dreadful if she doesn't ask, if she suspects anything. I'll tell her some lie. Does she expect me to lie? Very likely. What would happen if I had to stay on? It's getting dark. I'll go to bed early, or to a movie. God, I'm bored.

Suddenly the door opened, and Joli stood in the small, lighted hallway. "I knocked twice," she said. "You didn't answer, but I thought I'd risk opening the door. Would you mind turning on the light?"

He jumped up and switched on the lamps. Joli closed the door behind her and came a step forward. She wore a dark blue raincoat and cap to match. Her face was chalk-white in the light.

"Do you mind if I sit down for a minute? I saw Andi this afternoon. I hear Ila is coming back."

"Yes." Silence. What does she want? She knows I am by myself. She's never been here alone before.

Joli sat rigidly, looking straight before her. Then she raised her white face, and the green-blue eyes fluttered undecidedly. I ought to ask her how she is, what the

weather is like, how her mother feels. I ought to say something. . . .

"Are you really leaving?" she asked with trembling lips.

"Yes, we are."

She smoothed one glove over her knee. "And . . . if I should ask you not to go?"

"Why should I stay?" he asked glumly.

Joli stood up. Under her dark cap and red hair, her face looked pale as death. She lifted her head, then looked at the floor again. "I've never come to you alone before," she said slowly. "It's funny, isn't it, that I should come now, when I know that you will be going away? I don't want to be your mistress . . . I may be someone else's some day, but never yours . . . never. Do you know why? Because I love you. I'm pretty, and I'm young, and I love you. I've teased you. Oh, I know how you love me. If you had never told me I would know it just the same. But I won't be your mistress . . . because you have never said the one word I was waiting for. I wouldn't make a good mistress—I couldn't live and be afraid of the future. I don't want your money. I don't want to go away with you. You will have to stay here with me. Let her go away. Write to her. Or phone her that you don't want her to come back, poor, dear old Ila. I am sorry for her, but I won't leave you to her. I won't share you with anyone. I want you all to myself. She can keep all the money. Let her have it. We don't want it . . . Oh, I didn't know what to do! I've teased you—do you think it was easy for me to bear seeing how you loved me and how you suffered? That one word I was waiting for—didn't you want to say it, or didn't you dare? I thought I'd be

able to let you go away . . . You thought I was cheap, but I'm not cheap. When I heard that she was coming back, I knew suddenly what I had to do. And now I am here for always, if you want me. Or you come with me. It would be better. Leave all this here for her." She stopped and stood motionless, her eyes fixed on the floor.

His breath froze. Actress! a shrill, bitter voice shouted within him. Now I know at last what she is after. Actress, bitch, pretender. She wants my money. Not much, not very much, but everything. She doesn't want to share with anyone. She refuses to be my mistress. She wants me to cut myself off and marry her. . . .

Silence. And in the tension of the silence a trivial phrase occurred to him: Decisive moment. And the next instant he felt the indifference with which he had always looked at the course of his destiny, as if he were a stranger, a spectator; the indifference to desires, hopes and decisions; the indifference which twice before he had felt; he saw himself when he stood on the Roumanian frontier in front of the young English officer, and cried "Kamerad!" . . . and again he saw himself in London when he stood before a hesitant woman and said "I will go with you to the end of the world." Decisive moment? There had been two, and now a third? Should he reach out his hands for the third time? Perhaps for the last time in his life?

Silence. On Joli's face, in her questioning eyes, the strain faded, and a great weariness took its place. "Now you know," she said quietly. "I've told you everything, and . . . I am going . . . I'll wait for you."

He was alone in the room.

A few days later Ila and Edith returned to Budapest.

He and Glynn met their train. Ila embraced and kissed him. "You look pale, Toni," she said. "Have you been working too hard? Or playing too hard?" she laughed.

Yes, pale. Six days. For six days he had not seen Joli. She had not called. She was waiting for him. She was sure he would come for her—little actress, little red-headed comédienné. She had said her part, and said it well. She was sure of the effect, and now she was waiting for him to go down on his knees. She wants me to leave my wife and marry her. She loves me, but she will not be my mistress. Someone else's, yes, perhaps she is that already. She is waiting for me and my money, for her rich husband whom she will not share with anybody. And I am supposed to send poor, dear old Ila home with all her money. I could send her a wire: You needn't come back. Kind regards from Anthony Cadar and his fiancée. Oh, Joli, Joli! little actress, do you think I don't see through you? You will share me with no one. You mean you will share my money with no one. You want nothing. Ila can take it all. Shall we give her a little money or a lot? She can go back South to the sunshine; you and I will go somewhere else. You and I are poisoned; you by my money, I by you . . . I'll burn all my bridges behind me. Nothing exists any more—the past, the War, Agota, Vienna, Paul, London, the Fodors, the Berkeley Hotel, Helena Village, poor, dear old Ila—nothing, only you. . . .

That was only one night. There were five more nights and six days before Ila came—six grey, rainy autumn days and six endless nights.

"I'm awfully sorry—I haven't a minute to-day," he told Kelemen when he telephoned.

"Thank you for all your trouble, but I can't see any way to consider your proposals," he said to Kalotay.

He got rid of Salgo with no ceremony. He met Amman in the street, greeted him, and raced on. When he saw Simon from a distance, he crossed to the other side of the street.

"It was marvellous," said Ila when they were back in the hotel. "I'll tell you about it later. But you, Toni, I'm worried about you. What's the matter?"

"Nothing." He lit a cigarette. "A good boat sails from Southampton on the twenty-sixth, in the evening." He rose, took an envelope from the drawer of the desk, and put it slowly on the round table in front of her.

"Oh," said Ila, looking at the two tickets inside the envelope. "As soon as I come back we are ready to leave. I've seen so many things, and you've missed them all. It's a shame. Enough of Budapest? . . . Enough of Joli?"

Suddenly his face was sad, troubled—like a funny little boy's. "Yes, it's over." Neither of them spoke for a moment. Then, in a guilty, helpless, naïve whisper, he asked: "Did you know?"

Ila's eyes followed the rising cigarette smoke. "Toni, darling . . . such a silly question! I know—I knew everything. I never meant to tell you, but now I will. I know you so well—your face, your eyes, your voice, your thoughts. Now something is beginning, they say. I always knew. Toni . . . I'll be thirty-seven before long . . . and we still love each other. That's why I had to know all about what you did, so that I could look after you. I never asked about your life before I knew you. That was not my concern. But I had to know all that

happened after we met. Don't you see? I knew about Mrs Garnett and the Swedish woman in the Transvaal, and Jane Astfield and the rest. I couldn't help knowing—after all, we lived together. And sometimes I left you to yourself when I thought you had had too much of me. That's why I went away from Budapest without you. If I had thought there was the slightest danger, I would not have left you alone. But Joli wasn't dangerous—only an adventure. Later on—ten years from now, perhaps . . . But not before. Never, maybe. I know you have to get away from me for a little while sometimes, but you will always come back. I know it. You have enough money—you are independent, and you could leave me. Perhaps you will some day. I won't be able to stop you, and I won't try. You see, I'm quite honest with you. I'm not afraid . . .”

Silence. Only his deep, hard breath.

“You don't look well, Toni. You've had a bad time. Was it worth it?”

“Иа . . . I swear . . .” His voice was broken, harsh.

“Hush!” She cut him short. “We needn't say any more about it. It's of no consequence. And I don't want you to have to tell me lies. It is sometimes better to keep quiet; often necessary. You don't have to say everything, and lies are hateful. You started to lie to me about those business deals, but you gave it up. It hurt you and you were ashamed. I knew it, and I was glad and loved you for it. And now it's all over. I don't care what happened—it's all dead and buried.” Her strong hands held his; her fine, clear forehead touched his forehead; her lips kissed his.

She was not a lenient, magnanimous adversary who never forgets; but an understanding companion, the

companion of his body and his thoughts, his wife who was his mistress and his mother, to whom he could say: "Do you know—something has broken in me. Do you think it will ever mend? Will you help me? Will I get over it?" . . .

Then, after a few days, Andor Kelemen and Joli Kelemen came in answer to an invitation. They did not come together. Kelemen was pale, distraught, and taciturn. "Please forgive me," he had said the day before, for the first time in a straightforward manner. "I'm coming to you with a painful request . . . I am out of a job, and I must confess I had a vague idea that I might find a chance with you—that you might help me find a job somewhere abroad."

"I am sorry," Kadar replied, with a last untruth to Kelemen's first honest words, "but your request comes as a surprise to me. I'll be frank with you, and I don't want to raise any false hopes. I can't quite see how I could be of help to you."

The next day Kelemen stayed only for ten minutes.

"You have been charming to us," said Ila. "We shall always remember you and the good times we had together. We have not yet decided exactly when we are going, and we may see you again before we leave. But, just in case we shouldn't, I'll say . . ."

Joli came half an hour later, and she too stayed only a short time. Ila had in the meantime changed her dress.

"We shall always have a pleasant memory of you . . ."

Joli stood up and put on her blue raincoat. Her face was chalk-white—strangely white, too white under the red hair that was almost unnaturally red. Her mouth was not pretty.

Ila stood up, too. "If you can wait a minute, my dear, we'll go down together. I'll just put my things on." She disappeared into her room.

They were alone, and for a moment they stood face to face. Joli stepped up to him suddenly, quite near, so near that he could feel her small firm breasts through the thin raincoat. She raised her face.

"Will you kiss me?" she whispered, looking into his eyes. He did not answer, and looked back into her wild, green-blue eyes.

"No," he said, calmly, after a moment.

Her lips twitched. She stepped back and sat down. The three of them walked downstairs to the lounge, where the Glynnns were waiting.

"Well, if I don't see you again . . ." Ila kissed Joli, "I wish you all the best, Joli dear . . . Oh, look. It's raining. Toni, get the car and take her home. We'll wait for you here."

The car crawled slowly on the slippery road.

"You haven't given me an answer," said Joli, finally. "I've been waiting for you, or at least for an answer."

"There is no answer," he said, in a hollow voice.

"You won't have me . . . as a wife then?"

"No."

"Not even as a mistress?"

"No."

Silence. They had reached her house. The motor stopped, but neither of them moved. His thundering heart seemed ready to break from his body. He was hot all over; only his brain felt icy, with a frozen kind of stubbornness. Suddenly he felt Joli's hand on his, her face, her mouth very near.

"Are you going to kiss me?" she breathed.

"No," he answered quietly.

Joli got out, and he went with her to the door. She took off her right glove and gave him her hand, icy cold.

"Will you kiss my hand?" she asked, with trembling lips.

"No." They stood motionless for a moment.

"Are you angry with me?"

"No," he replied, and looked away.

"Oh, my God!" she cried very low. "The last time I'll ever see you in my life, and you are going away, and you haven't anything to say!"

"No."

"Well, then . . . good-night."

"Good-night."

Joli disappeared under the doorway. He went back to the car. Good-night. We are going home. Just in time—no wrong has been done. No need ever to think of all this again. I'll take Ila and the Glynns to a movie to-night, and to-morrow will pass somehow, and the next day will be the last. No need to worry—no wrong done. All this throbbing in my head is useless. It will stop if I really make up my mind to it. Very soon I will have nothing but peace again, sweet, soothing quiet. . . .

That night they went to a movie. The next day they had their meals together, walked together, shopped together—bought a belt, a pair of gloves, a bottle of perfume. They said good-bye to the Glynns. He drove the car back to the garage where he had hired it. On the way, a street-urchin nearly jumped under the wheels. He had to step on the brakes too quickly—the engine stopped. Battery run down. It happened just across from her house

Shortly before midnight they went to the station. Now there was no doubt that everything would soon be well again. The throbbing grew fainter.

8

The clatter quietened, the rhythm slowed. Brakes snarled as they hugged the wheels. Rails shrieked. The train came to a standstill. A long-drawn shout came from outside. Voices, the sound of steps, the rattle of tools. An engine rushed past with loud puffs and clankings. A shrill bell jangled inquisitively, a deep-voiced gong gave the reply.

Kadar sat up, raised the curtain, wiped away the mist on the window pane, and looked out. Most of their luggage was registered through to Southampton and sealed by the customs. Passports were with the sleeping-car conductor. A door slammed, subdued voices could be heard, somebody in the corridor shuffled past. Silence again. Then Ila's voice from the next compartment: "Toni."

"Yes, dear."

"I heard you move. Where are we?"

"At the frontier."

Silence, then: "Toni."

"What is it, sweet?"

"I haven't been asleep yet."

"Neither have I. We really ought to."

"I'll try again. Perhaps before the train starts . . ."

Quiet. Then German words. A whistle, a deep clang, a penetrating tinkle. The train began to move again. Wheels turned laboriously. Then the rhythm quickened,

the clatter grew louder, until the music of the train was taken up by the full orchestra—rattling, thundering, shrieking, drumming, wailing. The train raced wildly into the night, into the rain, into the darkness; away from Budapest; towards Vienna, towards Southampton, towards the Falconia, towards South Africa, towards home. Towards peace—who knows?

I must go to sleep.

V

THE BITTER END

IT was long past midnight. Kelemen sat in the station restaurant, gazing through the window at the foggy, wet street. About half an hour ago the slow, irritating rain had begun to come down. The window by his table was furrowed with darting rivulets. He tried wiping the pane with his fingers, but he could still see the street only dimly, because of the rain outside. Over the door was a large electric clock. Amusing to watch the long hand jump at intervals, brushing away two or three minutes at a time. It must have started to rain just as the train left.

What a coincidence that I telephoned the hotel. "Yes, Mr Kadar is leaving by the eleven-thirty train. We have just sent his baggage." He would have gone without saying a word. Why "would have" ? He has gone without saying good-bye. Of course, they told me day before yesterday "If we don't see you again before we leave . . ." Well, they haven't seen me.

An hour before the train left he took a seat by the restaurant window where he could see the cars driving up to the main entrance of the station. He pushed his glass of beer back and forth, occasionally swallowed a mouthful, watching every car as it stopped. Slowly the electric clock swept the minutes away. More and more cars arrived. Twenty minutes now before train time, and no sign of them. Maybe I missed them. Maybe

they are already in their compartment. He was burning with impatience. What of it; what do I expect of them? Why am I here anyway? Do I think he will change his mind—My dear Kelemen, I have thought it all over. Come along with us please. You are our guest from now on . . . Or—thank you, Andor, for all you have done for us, especially for helping me to get along . . . er . . . with your little sister . . . such a charming girl . . . with that red hair of hers . . . Will you allow me to give you this cheque as a sign of my gratitude? . . .

A cold shiver ran through his body. He stood up and beckoned to the sleepy waiter. "I'll be back in a minute," he said, pointing to the half-empty glass. "Will you leave this here, and keep an eye on my overcoat, please?"

He lingered in the corridor that led to the main hall. Very few people about. I wouldn't have thought it. Or perhaps they are all in the train. He walked slowly, cautiously, spying in every direction. At the entrance to the first-class waitingroom he stopped.

"Ticket, please," said a bored official.

"I'm not going in—only looking for someone." He glanced through the open door into the waitingroom. On a bench near the entrance to the platform sat Ila Kadar, a small grey suitcase beside her. He looked quickly away, and went back to the restaurant. Impatience followed him. He knocked on the tray for the waiter, paid, had himself helped into his overcoat, and left. Alone in the waitingroom. Hasn't Kadar come yet? Impossible. The train leaves in ten minutes. Maybe he isn't going.

He wandered out on the platform and began to walk slowly along the cars. No third-class—through cars

labelled Vienna, Innsbrück, Geneva, Paris. Exciting names. Suddenly he saw Kadar standing outside the Paris car, his wife beside him. The conductor was talking to them, cap in hand. I wish I could hear what he is saying. Kadar handed some money to a bowing conductor. Ila jumped lightly to the step of the carriage, and Kadar climbed behind her. Kelemen sidled away and stood inconspicuously by the wall. He could see the conductor as he led the way through the corridor of the sleeper, and opened the door of one section, then that of the adjoining one. Kadar remained standing in the corridor, his back to the platform, lighting a cigarette, and the smoke hovered around his head. The next minute a door slammed heavily, then another and another; the train began to move. Kadar stood with his back to the lighted window, Ila opposite him, leaning on the partition. They seemed to be talking. Slowly the train glided by, the reflection from the windows slipping in a line of bright squares along the platform. The last car passed Kelemen at a good pace, with a ruby lantern at the end.

He turned round and went back to the restaurant. A few people still sat at tables. The windows were dim and moist. Miserable night. It's raining, and I have no umbrella. Slowly he made his way towards the door, then suddenly turned back, walked to the table where he had been sitting before, took off his overcoat, and sat down.

"A glass of light."

"A glass of light," the waiter repeated to the wine boy.

"A glass of light," said the boy to himself.

Twenty-five minutes before twelve. Why in hell did I order another glass of beer? Why don't I go home? To-morrow morning . . . no, nothing to do to-morrow

morning. No office, or anything else. It's all over. They have gone. To-day is the twenty-sixth, almost the twenty-seventh. Just about a year since I found that paper in the dentist's waitingroom. A strange year. He yawned, and his head started to ache. It's all over. Who gives a damn? The beer makes me sleepy. No earthly need for a second glass. He tried to look through the foggy window. A streetcar with a bright head-light turned the corner. Two sleeping compartments. I'll take a trip—to Vienna. The money? Oh, yes, I have money—enough to last a whole month in Budapest or Vienna either. This Kadar business wasn't too expensive. He laughed to himself. It didn't cost much extra. Fortunately I was careful with my money. The only difference is that I spent on myself the forty pengö I usually give to Mama every month. Sari's husband didn't object. After all, I'm out of a job. Good God! What if Karoly finds out that I wasn't fired—that I gave notice when I thought . . . Anyway I couldn't have stood that lousy office much longer. Still . . . I might have done worse. They paid me six months' salary when I left. No use having a bad conscience about it . . . "May I speak to you quite frankly, Mr Bloch? I am going to leave the country—emigrate, let's say. That is the only reason for my giving notice. If you would be good enough to put in a word for me . . . I have been a clerk with important duties, and I think I am entitled to six months' salary. . . ." I would have been fired sooner or later anyway.

And now it is time to go home. They are on the way to Vienna. What the hell do I care where they are? They're gone—it's all over. Nevertheless—he knocked on the rim of his glass with a coin—he didn't need to

sneak away. Crazy! He didn't sneak. He had said good-bye in the hotel. Well, let's go home.

The muddy streets were deserted; at the corner of an alley-way some shabby women loitered under dripping umbrellas, the rain splashed merrily over the awning of a cabaret. I've not been inside for a long time—since last Christmas, when I went there with the boys. I wonder who will be at the café next Thursday. Maybe they don't know yet that Kadar has left. I'll be the first to tell them—just as I told them a year ago that Antal Kadar existed. What day of the week is it? Maybe I'll not go to the café on Thursday. What do I care about the whole lot of them?

He reached his house and rang the bell. Finally the porter came, mumbling disagreeably, and opened the door. Kelemen walked upstairs in the dark. His head was aching—a dull pain at the back. The loathsome taste of beer came up in his throat as he groped along the hall to his room. Ugh! the stingy yellow light on the bed, the shabby, wine-colored velvet of the sofa, the table covered with white oil-cloth! He flung off his shoes and clothes, and scattered them about the room. His night-shirt was damp; its cold touch made him shiver. He lay stiff and cold in bed, staring into the dark. And, suddenly, he was forced to say the words he had been trying to put out of his head, words as clear and cool as a death sentence or an epitaph: I have failed. They have gone, and my last hope has gone with them. A streetcar bell rang out: Failure! A loud crack came from the old wardrobe: Failure! With a childish, pathetic gesture he drew his arms from under the covers and stretched them out into the darkness. They are gone. I have failed. It is all over. Then a tired, meek

voice cried out in him : Let's start all over . . . the whole thing. He pressed his lips tightly together, and turned wearily to the wall.

Bitter, merciless night. Sleep was an impossibility. Every piece of furniture cracked and whispered, and every sound echoed a hundred times in his head. A sort of drowsy numbness came over him ; the next minute he was quivering from head to foot, a weird, whining, nameless dread in his heart. Lights, visions, dreams danced a wild fandango before him. Voices trembled in the air, but it was impossible to understand them—as if hundreds of people were whispering in the same monotonous voice at the same time. He reached for his watch, his arm weak and heavy. He could not see the dial in the dark, but he was too tired to turn on the light. Still gripping the watch, his hand dropped down beside his body, and he felt, rather than heard, the ticking until at last he sank into a deep, blind sleep.

After lunch he went to Sari's. Her husband had already returned to the shop. Sari stayed at home most of the time now—she was expecting another baby. Mama was having her afternoon nap. Joli sat in the rocking-chair with her feet drawn up under her, a book from the lending library in her hand. The diningroom was filled with the heavy smell of cabbage.

"I had cabbage for lunch too," he said when he came in.

"I said the window ought to be open." Joli looked up from her book.

"It's not so bad," said Sari, sniffing. "If I open the window you complain that it is too cold. But if you can't stand it, you might get up and open it yourself."

"All right," said Joli, and continued to read.

Kelemen sat down at the table, put a tooth-pick in his mouth, picked up his mother's silver-rimmed spectacles that lay beside a crumpled napkin, took the newspaper from a chair, and ran through the headlines.

"Any news, Andi?" asked Sari. She rose awkwardly and began to sweep bread crumbs into a small basket.

"No." He forced a cheerful tone into his voice. "Only more murders in Düsseldorf, and a dull day on the stock market."

"All right. I don't feel like joking. What about you? Have you found a job?"

"Not a chance." His voice quivered. "Do you think it's easy these days?"

"I know, I know. Have you seen Bleyer?"

"No," he answered drearily. "To tell you the truth, I don't think he could help me."

"That's not the point," she cried sharply. "Don't get opinions beforehand. Go and find out. Karoly spoke to him about you. He'll be cross if you don't take the trouble of trying. Have you seen Havas?"

"No."

"Andi, I can't understand you. You act as if you hadn't been out of a job for five months."

Joli glanced up from her book, but said nothing.

"Look here, Joli," Sari turned to her sister, "you know very well Teri is busy ironing to-day. You might give me a hand instead of sitting there doing nothing."

"Such as?"

"Such as helping me clear the table."

With a listless movement Joli put the book on the window-sill, stretched, went to the table and picked up her mother's spectacles. "I say, Andi, are you doing

anything this afternoon? Don't you want to take me to a movie?"

"No, I can't say I do."

"Oh, all right. I was just asking. But I'd like to talk to you."

"Am I in your way?" asked Sari, irritably.

"Yes, you are," Joli answered calmly, and looked steadily at her.

Sari flung the small brush on to the table and strode out of the room. Joli sat down again in the rocking-chair, two hard, bitter lines near her mouth, deep circles around her eyes. Kelemen walked slowly to the window. A door slammed in the next room. Joli looked up. "She's going to cry again. God, but I'm fed up with it all!"

"Never mind," he said quickly. "What movie do you want to see?"

"I don't want to see any. I only wanted to get rid of her. I can tell you just as well here."

"Carry on," he said in a strained voice. He knew exactly what she would say; he had felt it coming.

She looked straight into his eyes. "Have they gone?" she asked quietly.

"Yes."

"Did you see them off?"

"Yes—that is . . ."

"What do you mean? You either did or didn't."

"I didn't see them off, but I saw them leave. I went to the station. I didn't go near them."

"I see." Silence lay around them like a heavy screen separating them from the rest of the world.

"What else do you want to know?" He had to say something, anything to break the silence.

"Nothing." She hesitated for a moment, then: "He was here."

"Where? When?"

"In the street yesterday afternoon. He didn't come up. I was sitting at the window. He stopped his car across the street for a minute, and then drove away. He didn't get out, but I recognized the car." She rocked in the chair. "Andi, be honest with me. Did I spoil things?"

"What do you mean?" There was distress in his voice. "Anyway it's not worth talking about."

She jumped up, two red blotches burning on her pale cheeks. "Andi, I don't care . . . I've got to talk to you. Who else can I talk to? Andi, you know what he wanted from me." Silence. "You know what he wanted, and you told me to be sensible."

"I . . ."

"You knew I'm not innocent, and you wanted me to be his mistress."

"You're crazy, Joli!"

"You knew he made all sorts of promises—fantastic things about what he would do if you and I went to South Africa." Her face under the red hair was flaming, her voice deep and broken. "Maybe you were right, Andi. But you didn't know that I'm the sort of woman men tire of quickly. And what would have happened then? You didn't know he is cold and scheming and selfish, but I felt it, and I knew that when he was through with me . . ."

He felt weak and empty. Leaning against the window he stared at her.

"Do you know that I went to see him at the hotel, alone?" A long, terrible silence. "I think that was when I spoiled everything. I told him that he could

never touch me unless he got a divorce from that old woman and married me."

A sound like a siren began in his ears, faintly at first, then louder until he could scarcely hear what she said.

"Tell me, Andi, did I spoil things? I shouldn't have tried to get everything . . . at once. Should I have given myself to him and left the rest to luck? You told me to be sensible. Was I too sensible, or not sensible enough? Tell me, Andi, was it my fault that everything went wrong for both of us? Did I spoil everything?"

Suddenly he turned cold and hard. With an effort he hid behind a mask. "I don't know what you're talking about, Joli. Have you gone crazy? Do you realize what you're saying?"

"I know I made a mess of it. It can't be helped now. I lost my head. It was all such a terrible failure. But I'll get over it. I'll go on living—if not with him, with someone else. With Toto Arany, and then another, and another. . . ."

He leaped to her, seized her arm and gave it a furious twist. "Joli! Are you out of your head? How can you talk like that?"

The pain in her wrist sobered her. The color disappeared from her cheeks, her voice was quiet. "Just as you like. We won't say anything more about it." She sank down into the rocking-chair, and picked up her book again.

An indescribable repulsion swept over him. I can't stand it any longer. I must get out.

He stood on the pavement in the rain that beat on his open umbrella, on his shoes and trouser legs. People walked about in the grey streaks of rain as if they were suspended by them from the sky, like marionettes in a

mysterious puppet-show. Good God! . . . with Toto Arany until some other man comes along, but never with Kadar. She spoiled things. Was it really her fault? I tried to sell her because I knew that she was not innocent, that she had a lover—not the first or the last one. She had said so: "I will do as I like, and you can take it or leave it. You're no one to give lectures on morals. Why should I be pure, and for whom? Will you find a husband for me? Do you think I'll marry a Karoly and sell sausages? It's none of your business what I do. This isn't the middle ages." Joli had explained all this short and clear when he scolded her once for running around with those youngsters. After that they had not talked about such things—until his damnable remark, "Be sensible."

I tried to sell her to Kadar. If I had believed that she was untouched, would I have tried to sell her just the same? It might have turned out all right—for both of us. Be sensible . . . and she had ruined everything. Get rid of the old woman! She can't be more than thirty-seven or eight. He burst into loud, bitter laughter, and said into the rain: "I won't get rid of you, old woman!" A man with a large black oil-cloth parcel under his arm came towards him. "Old woman!" he repeated in a loud voice. The man with the parcel looked at him curiously and walked on.

Everything had collapsed, everything that had been so carefully planned for a year. Failure! The word echoed dismally in him, while the mechanism of habit raised his feet and carried him forward in the street. Vague, rugged wisps of thought passed through his tired mind. Mama is getting old. I only gave her forty pengő last time instead of eighty, and I don't know when I can

give her any more. I'll have to look up Bleyer and Havas.

Half-past four. Time for a cup of coffee. I'll go to a café. I didn't sleep last night and lunch was rotten. I had cabbage at the restaurant and they had cabbage at home, too. Is it the season for cabbage? He stopped in front of a café window. A cup of coffee will do me good. People in dining-cars have coffee about this time.

There was an empty table in a corner. He made his way towards it, squeezing through the crowded room. After the first drop of coffee, a sudden warmth swept through him. His face grew flushed and he wanted to take off his collar. It felt damp and tight. I'll have to call on Bleyer and Havas sooner or later. I don't care what kind of job they give me, so long as it is a job. I can get along somehow until something turns up.

At the next table on his right sat a group of youngsters, arguing loudly. A black-haired boy with flaming eyes was the noisiest of all. "Surrealism," he cried, "is the only way . . ." A thin little blonde girl with fuzzy hair interrupted him. She raised one arm in a wild gesture, then dropped it suddenly. "Damn! my shoulder strap broke." She slipped her hand inside her blue silk blouse and fumbled unconcernedly around her breast.

"Can I help you?" volunteered the surrealist, and his deep-set black eyes rested on the girl with a lascivious look—exactly the way Kadar stared at Joli when he first saw her in the red swimming suit and red shoes at the pool, then again in the roadhouse at supper.

"You can't appreciate surrealism . . ." Why doesn't he shut up? I can't appreciate lots of things, but I don't make such a row about it. I never should have made the

mistake of risking everything on one card. I let the chance slip when Kadar said that in South Africa there is room for hard-working, clear-thinking men. I shouldn't have waited for Joli to . . .

Suddenly he was filled with a burning fury. He knocked on the side of a glass so violently that everyone at the surrounding tables turned and stared at him. He stood up, trembling with impatience until the waiter came to take his money. As he walked out, he knocked against chairs and people. In the cold street his excitement subsided. Bad nerves. It would be a good idea to go to a specialist for a cure. Mr Andor Kelemen is suffering from nervous exhaustion and requires complete rest . . . Otto Arany wrote that in April. Toto Arany, with whom Joli . . . I won't have it. I can't stand it.

He stopped at a news-stand on the corner and bought two papers. Absolute waste of money—I'll never read them. He folded the papers and slipped them into his coat pocket. They made it bulge. He took them out again and put them separately into two pockets, then walked on, looking in store windows. I can't go on killing time this way till night. I'll have to go to a movie or pick up a woman in the street. If I had one single friend—not one of the boys, but someone to talk things over with. . . . There's a movie around the corner.

He walked into the crowded lobby. What is the film? And who cares? He looked round. In front of the huge mirror stood a girl with a blue cap, deep red lips, thin black eyebrows. Very attractive, very slender, with good breasts. She took off one glove and fumbled in her handbag. Nice white hands, with straight fingers. Probably a shop girl or a typist. What of it? He stood near the girl and stared deliberately at her. She looked at

him for a moment, moistened her lips, and turned her back. Now their eyes met in the mirror. He took a step forward and gazed straight at her in the glass. This time she did not look away. Not waiting for anyone, or if she is, I congratulate him. The electric bell jingled, and the line of people in front of the ticket window moved up a pace. The girl turned away from the mirror with a swift movement and stepped into line. He stepped behind her. Others joined the row and pushed him forward lightly against her.

"I beg your pardon," he said very low. The girl's head did not move. He bent his knees slightly to touch her leg. She drew it away immediately. The line moved forward, and he made another attempt with his knee. She did not move away. So far so good. He looked at her in the mirror again, and she looked back.

"It is a good show to-night," he said quietly.

"Have you seen it before?"

"No, I just know."

"Good." Another step forward. The blue-capped head bent down to the ticket window. "Have you a balcony seat in the middle for one-fifty?" she asked.

"Balcony centre in the fifth row. Will that do?"

Her head made a half-turn backwards and she said "All right."

"How many?"

"Two," said Kelemen, and laid a coin on the glass plate.

Her name was Maca, and she worked in a drug store. She was twenty-four, had two sisters, and lived at home. She was really not in the habit of making acquaintances at movies. She didn't need to. But his face seemed so familiar to her. Did he know some people called Benedek,

who lived in Damjanich Street? No? Well, anyway, she didn't want to make a fuss at the ticket window. That was why she let him. . . .

All this between the lobby and the balcony. She was pleasantly fragrant—perfume, slightly mixed with a drug store odor, but it was a good, heavy, complicated smell, precisely what you would expect. When the main picture came on the screen he took Maca's hand. She returned the pressure. Their arms and knees touched.

"Now we'll go somewhere for supper," he said as they left the theatre.

"Marvellous. But not at an automat, because they give me the creeps."

They went to a small restaurant on the Boulevard and sat at a table beside the wall. Maca took off the blue cap. She had smooth, glistening black hair, parted in the middle, and he could not help thinking there was a faint resemblance to Ila Kadar. He was suddenly depressed, and eyed the menu without interest, calling impatiently to the waiter, who seemed to be in no hurry to take his order. Maca tried to pretend that she wanted something very light and simple. He paid no attention to her, and ordered fish with tartar sauce, and roast meat to follow.

"A really grand supper," she exclaimed, as she smacked her lips.

He began to dislike her. She's hungry, of course. Why not? She went alone to the movie hunting for someone. Perhaps she had an eye on me before I noticed her. An unpleasant, cold silence fell between them. Maca seemed to feel that something was wrong, and began to chatter about the movie.

"It was dumb except for that one song. Do you

remember?" She began to hum the tune. Pretty little voice.

"You have a nice voice. Good enough to be a singer in a cabaret."

"Do you think so really? But I'd have to have my hair dyed blonde for that."

Blonde . . . he remembered the blonde English singer in the American Bar that first evening with Kadar. Maca saw his expression change.

"You're a queer person. I can't make you out. You're always acting as if you were cross about something."

He gave a short, dry laugh. "No, silly. Why should I be. I'm in a very good humor, and you mustn't pay any attention to my face." He tried to smile, and began to talk about the movies again. The supper came.

"Only a little for me. . . . Only a drop of wine." But she ate hungrily. "Aren't you going to take that other slice? Well, I won't let it go to waste. . . ."

"Go ahead. Dessert?"

"Marvellous! Let's. I adore cream-puffs . . . will you think I'm a pig if I ask for a slice of layer-cake?"

"Have an apple?"

"Yes, please. Fruit is good for you."

He ate almost nothing—her greediness spoiled his appetite. Once, ten years ago, when he still had plenty of money, he and some others had picked up a couple of half-starved women, just for the fun of seeing them eat. They were lousy-looking females—not like Maca. They went to a remote restaurant and stuffed them like geese. He remembered the one in a red blouse who swallowed eight pairs of Frankfurt sausages and six glasses of beer. It was fun to watch them.

He certainly was not enjoying it this time. He looked at Maca, the dark eyes sparkling, the white hands flashing between the cutlery and the food. A thin, chocolate-colored line appeared on her upper lip.

"Wipe your mouth," he said abruptly.

"I'm sorry." Her voice was apologetic. She took a little mirror from her handbag, examined her face, and drew the napkin across her lips. "It's only a little chocolate." She lifted up the mirror. "Oh, la! my hair! The wave is all spoiled." And she began to smooth it with a small comb.

Spoiled . . . "Leave it alone!" he demanded impatiently.

"Good lord! you do look cross. I can't understand you. My hair just got mussed under my cap."

He was not listening. A clammy sort of chill gripped his body. I'm sick. I ought to go home. He called the waiter, and paid the check with a hundred-pengö bill. Maca looked at the money between narrowed eyelids. He was clumsy about getting into his overcoat, made his way to the door, then stopped to wait for her.

In the street he took her arm. I can't go home now . . . alone. Impossible. I can't endure another sleepless night. He gripped her arm. "Maca . . . where shall we go now?"

"Where do you want to go? A café?" she asked, uncertainly.

He laughed. "No, let's go where we can be alone, darling."

She pulled away from him. "Look here . . . honestly, I'm afraid of you!"

"Don't be silly, Maca. Why should you be? I'm not a bad man. In fact, I'm a very good man."

"I was only joking," she said quickly. "I'm not afraid of anybody. Where shall we go? And why do you want us to be alone?" He did not answer. "We can't go to my house, because I live with my mother. Can't we go to yours? Because I wouldn't like to go to an hotel."

I don't live with anyone—only a sofa with a shabby, red velvet cover, and an oil-cloth covered table. Good enough for a girl you can pick up in a movie.

"We'll go to my place." He put his arm through hers. "I live near here . . . I'm afraid . . ."

"Of what?"

"That you won't find my room very attractive."

"Have you a separate entrance? . . . And a bathroom?"

"Let's go, darling. I have everything. But quickly, because it's cold."

At the door he put a pengö into the porter's hand.

"Not so bad after all," she said, looking round. "Is it a front room?"

He raised his finger to his lips.

"Are they asleep?" she whispered.

"Yes. There's a room between, but we'll have to be quiet." He pointed to a chair by the table, went to the wardrobe and took out a box of crackers and a bottle of cognac. The glasses were in the drawer of the wash-stand.

"Marvellous," said Maca. "But I don't want any crackers. I couldn't eat another thing."

He filled the glasses.

"Happy days," she said, raising her glass. "What's your first name? I'll have to call you that now."

He sat close to her. Her eyes surveyed the room,

weighed everything, and stopped on the open bed. He followed her look, then put his arms around her and kissed her. She closed her eyes; her lips were parted. They tasted of cognac. He let her go suddenly, stood up, and took off his coat.

"What are you doing?" She stood up too.

"Taking off my things . . . Well, Maca?"

"I'd like you to turn off the light."

He switched off the lamp, and sat on the bed while he took off his shoes. A minute later something pressed down the bed beside him—his eyes were not used to the darkness—he stretched out a hand and felt her next to him. She had undressed with commendable speed.

"Brrr," she whispered. "It's cold. I'm getting under the blanket. Come quick."

She was asleep—he could hear her light, regular breathing—but he was wide awake. He lay there, propped on his elbow, looking at her. Her hair was a large black shadow on the pillow, her hair with the wave all . . . spoiled. Maca, I spoiled your wave. Don't be angry with me. Things are spoiled for me too. . . .

Maca, are you asleep? Don't sleep. I didn't bring you here to sleep. I didn't want you at all, I swear it. But I couldn't bear being alone. Maca! I must have someone with me . . . because something inside me is broken. You see, she is asleep. Joli, she is asleep, she is spoiling things for me. You spoiled things for me too, Joli. Oh, God! we spoiled everything, Joli! What will become of us? We ruined everything, a voice screamed in him, we ruined everything! He quivered, and a deep groan broke from him. Maca woke up.

"What is it?"

His whole body shook with soundless, violent sobs. He lay, face down, his head resting on his crossed arms. My whole life is spoiled. . . .

"God in heaven! What's the matter?" Maca whimpered, shivering. She reached out her hand and touched his trembling shoulder. "God! You're crying!" The uncontrollable sobs racked his body. "Jesus, Mary . . . I'll scream." In her fright her hand instinctively found the lamp chain. In the soft light from the blue shade she stared at him. "What's the matter? Tell me, darling."

"Nothing," he groaned. "Turn off the light."

"Darling, I was so scared," her voice trembled. "Is there anything I can do for you? You've been crying. . . . I know, you're worried. Tell me, what's worrying you?"

His reserve broke completely. "Worried," he moaned, "horribly worried. . . ."

"You poor dear. I knew something was wrong—at the restaurant. Tell me what it is. Tell your Maca." She bent over him. Suddenly her hand stiffened on his shoulder. "Look here, are you sick? Have you . . . you know what I mean?"

"No, not sick . . ."

She was not quite reassured; doubt still lingered in her mind, then gradually she grew calmer. "What is it then? Love affair?" she asked quietly. "Tell me about it."

"Yes," he whispered.

"You poor darling. Tell me about it. It will do you good. Did she leave you?"

"Yes, she was unfaithful, and she left me."

"Never mind, sweetheart. I'm here. Forget all about her. Was she prettier than I am?"

"Yes . . . No, she was only different."

"Everybody is different, silly," she murmured. "Never mind, so long as you have someone. What was she like?"

"Red hair," he groaned.

"Oh, la! That's bad. Red heads are always false."

He sat up suddenly. "You know, Maca, I'm very fond of you. . . . For God's sake don't go to sleep again."

"But, darling, it's not morning, and I'm so tired."

"Maca, don't let's turn off the light. Stay awake. You can sleep here all day to-morrow. But don't go to sleep now—I can't sleep. Shall I tell you about the red-haired girl?"

"All right."

He sat up in bed, the girl lying beside him, and began in a feverish whisper to tell a story. About a red-haired woman named Camilla, not Hungarian—a foreigner. They met on an ocean liner, and she came to Budapest on account of him. They loved each other, but for a whole year nothing happened. He waited, but it was very hard, because her husband was with her. The hot, whispering voice went on and on with the fantastic tale, colorful, melodramatic, involved, and full of absurd contradictions, impossible situations, inhuman self-torture. The minutes flew by in the grey autumn dawn, and he talked and talked in a hoarse whisper, seeking release in remembering and dying. . . . She deceived me and left me. . . .

Maca was asleep—had been for half an hour or more. When he discovered it, wild rage flamed up in him. Unfaithful! She is cheating me too. She has left me;

she has gone to sleep. I'll choke her. Then, as he touched her and she started up, his anger broke. All the weariness of their embraces, of the sleepless night, and his delirious story had shattered his nerves. He lay back with burning eyes.

"Yes, I know," Maca stammered, "the red-haired woman . . . Camilla . . ."

"Be quiet," he whispered. "It's almost morning, Maca. We'll have to clear out soon. Let's go to the Turkish bath."

"Marvellous. I didn't have enough sleep."

They dressed quietly. A quarter of six. The front door was open, and the porter's fat wife, enveloped in layers of shawls, was sweeping the sidewalk. It was just beginning to get light. Cold. Clouds in the grey sky. They raced across the street to a taxi stand and got into a cab. "To the Turkish bath." In the taxi he thought of something. "Give me your address, Maca." He took out his wallet.

"It will be better if you look me up at the shop." She gave him the address and phone number of the drug store.

"Right. . . . And, don't misunderstand me, Maca, but . . ." He opened the wallet.

"No," she said, but without much determination. "I won't take money from you . . . unless . . . the other day I saw a darling white pullover, and not very expensive. I wouldn't mind if you bought it for me."

"Good. But you go and buy it. I haven't time." He took out a folded fifty-pengö bill.

She watched him, and saw how much it was. "Oh! it won't cost that!" Her voice trembled a little.

"Never mind." He replaced the bill, and, drawing

out another for a hundred pengō, put it into her hand. "Here, Maca. Put it away."

"Thank you. It's terribly nice of you."

Of course it is. What does it matter if I have three hundred pengō left or only two hundred and fifty? "That's all right. You must have breakfast at the bath. Have you any change? And if you leave before I do . . ."

They reached the bath. He bought two tickets and handed one to her. "Here you are. If you leave before I do, I'll drop in at the shop, to-day maybe." He kissed her hand. "Good-bye, Maca."

He was alone in the hot pool, sitting on the steps with his eyes closed. Nice little thing, Maca. I've never had a nice girl. I'll rest a while and have breakfast, then look up Bleyer and maybe Havas too. His head nodded and he slipped off the steps into the hot water. Here! you can't go to sleep. You'll get drowned. He watched with satisfaction as his arms turned red in the hot water. He splashed, went under the shower to cool off, then lay down on the low bench where the attendant smothered him with soapsuds. Shower again, then the cold pool. His body felt fresh, elastic, and his head was clear. Cold water is wonderful. He swam twenty or thirty times up and down the pool with leisurely strokes, and climbed out. The attendant rubbed him down, wrapped a large towel around him, and gave him a pair of slippers. He lay on one of the couches. Cold water. No matter what is wrong with you, a cold water cure . . . The next minute he was asleep.

It was past eleven o'clock when he reached the warehouse. The bell tinkled as he opened the front door, and from the other end of the passage a swarthy figure in a heavy coat and hat came up to him.

"Mr Bleyer? I'm Andor Kelemen."

"Oh, yes. Glad to see you. Your brother-in-law spoke to me about you."

"Yes."

"I suppose you know what it's all about."

"Yes. A job."

"You understand, don't you, it's to be on a commission basis? We can't give salaries these days. We don't need a staff; we need customers. So—your territory will be the whole of Budapest, including the suburbs, if you like. Karoly is a good friend of mine, so I'll be willing to advance you a hundred pengő a month for six months on account. If you get on, we'll make the hundred permanent. That's the proposition, Mr Kelemen."

"I see."

"The usual commission is seven per cent., but I'll allow you seven and a half, say eight. About getting started—you can have a look at the stock and the workshop, and I'll give you a price list. Then you can look up your friends. You'll have to keep your eyes open; watch the papers for announcements of engagements—not weddings, married people have furniture already—engagements. Go around and see them right away. We make a speciality of standard furniture, inexpensive type. Complete sets and single pieces. You'll get on to it before long. Well, you can think it over."

"I think . . . I think I could start on the first. I have another offer, but I'll let you know right away."

Feeble, yellow November sunshine hovered in the streets. Good-morning, sir, would you like a complete bedroom set, or diningroom set, or a few chairs? Now let's see Havas.

Huge store—rush, bustle, shouting, customers, clerks.

He hesitated at the entrance. No one paid any attention to him. He gave himself a push and asked a salesman where he could find the manager. The salesman pointed at a door. With a sinking heart he opened it. A desk and a round table, and at the table a fat little man eating ham from a piece of waxed paper.

"I beg your pardon. I'm looking for Mr Havas."

"I'm Havas. What can I do for you?"

"My name is Kelemen. My brother-in-law told me . . ."

"Oh, yes. I remember. Sit down, please. Excuse me if I eat while I talk. I've got stomach trouble and have to eat something every two hours. Well, well. I'm a great friend of your family. Used to know your father—fine chap." He jumped up, snatched the telephone, and pressed the button on the desk, waited an instant, then began to push the button impatiently. "What's the matter with you? Miss Hermine? Why don't you answer? Never mind about being busy. Miss Hermine, send me in a glass of cold water. Istvan isn't there? Where is he? Then have Mr Ligety bring me a glass of water!" He slammed down the receiver and went back to the table. "As I was saying, I know your brother-in-law, too—fine chap. Well, let's get down to business. I need a local agent for Miskolcz. It would be better, of course, if you knew our line, but I told your brother-in-law that on his account . . . You leave town Sunday night, return Friday night. No fixed salary, advance on commissions one hundred to start, travelling expenses paid, eight pengő a day for sundries. Commission six to ten per cent. according to the class of goods. You'll work Miskolcz and the surrounding territory. Let me show you on the map."

"Yes, but I thought . . ."

"Here! here!" said Havas, dismally. "If you don't like the country, that's a different story. But it's all I have to offer." He jumped to the telephone and pounded the button. "Miss Hermine, what about that damned water!"

Kelemen stood up. If Mr Havas did not object, he would think it over. In the meantime he was very grateful. If he decided to take the job he would report not later than the first.

Well, I've seen Havas. I wonder if he got his water. Now I can choose—furniture or textiles. Nothing to complain about now. He reached the Andrassy Avenue and strolled along towards the park. How warm the sun is for this time of year. Rotten day yesterday. Furniture salesman or textile salesman? My ambition is to be a good salesman. My next ambition is . . . I haven't any other ambition. The sky above the trees is powder blue and the sun is warm. Wonderful day. Bad time of year to be travelling on the sea, though. Storms any minute. Why on earth am I walking in the park? There's nothing else to do. I've not started to sell furniture yet, or . . . Good lord! I don't even know what Havas sells. Textiles. That might mean a lot of things. Travelling salesman—serious, difficult occupation. It only sounds funny in jokes. I'll work hard and earn money—a lot of money, one way or another. I'll keep my eyes open. Nobody need feel sorry for me. The nightmare is over. No more Kadar, no more South Africa. I've escaped all that. Life is really beginning now. Serious work; the fight for life and fortune. That would be a good title for a film.

He marched on, with quick, military steps, whistling a

martial tune into the air. The sun is wonderful. Everything will come out all right. The important thing is that I've got my spirit back—all that nonsense is over. Maca is a grand girl. Clean and neat, and she smells good. If I can't afford restaurants, she'll have to get used to automats. Lucky for me I found her.

A young nursemaid came toward him, pushing a perambulator with her left hand. A screaming youngster tugged at the other. Kelemen stopped in front of them and bent down to the child.

"Here, here, big boys don't cry in the street," he said. "Whoops now! Let's see you laugh! One . . . two . . ."

The nurse and the child stared for a moment at the comical face he made, then a smile flashed in the tear-filled blue eyes, and the child burst into laughter.

"That's better." He stood up, raised his hat to the nurse, and walked on.

Very simple. You have to know how to talk to people in their own language. He strode on. The main thing is that I've got the urge to work and live. He stopped at the corner. Half-past twelve. I'll take a bus home. Sleep an hour after lunch, and then go to see Mama for a minute. I'll have to let Karoly know I saw Bleyer and Havas. He jumped on a bus. Damn! I should have taken number eight. That stops at the restaurant. Never mind.

Clouds chased across the sun. Over Buda they had gathered in a heavy grey blanket. Sure to rain again. What a lot of care-free people strolling along. Care-free hell! I looked that way, too, for five months, while I was. . . . Suddenly the impulse came over him not to eat in his usual restaurant. I'm not paying by the month now. I'll walk along the embankment. He left the bus

at Vörösmärty Square. Why not eat at the Ritz, in the grillroom? I won't be coming here again for a long time. I'll have to live very economically.

He studied the menu with great care, asked the waiter's advice, and ordered an elaborate lunch. He thought of Maca as he ate slowly, enjoying each bite. Dessert and cheese and fruit. Black coffee with cream. After lunch he bought a package of Egyptian cigarettes, lit one, and made himself comfortable in an easy-chair. No one can say I don't live well. I'll always manage to live well. I don't care a damn for anything or anybody. I'll show them. He lit another cigarette from the first, paid his check, and left the grillroom. I'll drop in somewhere for another cup of coffee on the way to see Mama. He entered a noisy café, glanced round as if he were looking for someone, and took a seat beside the window where he could see the bridge. Ugh! I ate too much. "Black coffee and cognac," he said to the waiter.

"Hungarian or French cognac?"

"French, of course."

He drank the coffee, sniffed the cognac, and swallowed it in a gulp. Good stuff. He thumbed through the pages of the evening paper, then put it down. "Another cognac, same brand, please," he called to the waiter.

The second glass did not burn his throat as much as the first. The third trickled down smoothly and warmed him. The fourth made his eyes sparkle. The fifth brought songs into his head. The sixth . . .

Decent stuff that cognac. Very decent. Everything was decent—Mama, Sari, Joli. Nice, reasonable people. At six o'clock I'll call for Maca and take her to a movie—no, a cabaret. We'll have dinner and then go home, to Mr Kelemen's, to Uncle Andi's, to sleep . . . marvellous.

We are fond of each other, aren't we, Maca? Maybe we'll get married and buy some inexpensive furniture from Uncle Bleyer. Suddenly he was ashamed. I'm drunk.

Grey clouds covered the whole sky, hiding the sun. A fresh wind sprang up, making him quicken his steps. He took a short cut to his mother's house. A few, heavy raindrops fell as he reached the door, and soon the pavement was drenched.

Mama was having a nap. Sari sat at the table reading the paper, Joli in the rocking-chair with her legs drawn up underneath her, a book in her hand.

"Hello, girls!" he cried as he rushed in. "How are you?"

They murmured a hello, and went on reading. Silence. He sat down beside Sari, wondering what to say. How pale she is—maybe because she's pregnant. How do I know why she's pale? Lucky for me I don't have a family.

"Is Mama asleep?" Sari nodded. "When will she be up?"

"In half an hour if we don't call her."

"Because . . . I wanted to tell her . . . that everything is fixed up."

"What do you mean?" asked Sari, looking up for the first time.

"With Bleyer."

"Why didn't you say so?" Color came into her face. "Have you told Karoly?"

"I'll see him later."

"How much are they going to pay you?"

"A hundred to start with and commission, but I can see there's money in it." He paused. "I've already

talked to someone who . . . who will probably be re-furnishing his apartment."

"You see? I told you," cried Sari. "I'll go see if Mama is awake. I wish you'd go tell Karoly right away."

When she was out of the room, Joli said: "You don't like movies, do you?"

He looked at her, puzzled.

"I saw you last night at a movie with a pretty girl in a blue cap."

"Did you though?" he said sharply. "What of it?" He was curiously and unreasonably annoyed. Silence for a moment.

"I went with a man. With Toto Arany."

"Look here, Joli, what's the game? Do you think you're funny?"

Her blue-green eyes filled with tears; her long, slim legs dropped down, her narrow shoulders fell back against the creaking wicker chair. "Oh God! . . . I'm sorry, Andi," she said quietly, almost humbly. "Don't be cross, but I'm so fed up with everything."

He swallowed his bitter words, for his mother opened the door. Joli turned her head towards the window.

"Andi dear. Sari just told me."

"Yes, Mama. Isn't it fine." He kissed her.

"Andi, what have you been drinking?"

"Oh . . . only a little wine with soda water." He managed to suppress the ill-humour that flared up in him. "Before I forget it, Mama. . . ." He took out his wallet and jerkily laid a hundred-pengö bill on the table. "I'll begin to draw my salary on the first, and then I can make up for last summer."

"Thank you, Andi. I've always said that my children. . . ."

Violent impatience came over him. He said good-bye quickly and rushed off. Joli's head was still turned towards the window. There was a foul, bitter taste in his throat. I'm thirsty. I'll drink something—water.

When he reached his room, he remembered that he should have gone to see Karoly. Shall I go out again? No, I'll go later. The store is open till eight. He took the bottle of cognac from the wardrobe. We didn't drink much last night. Decent girl, the maid. She washed the glasses and put them away. A drop can't do any harm. Not as good as what I had after lunch, but it might be worse.

A timid rap on the door. Mrs Hunka, the landlady. What on earth has she come for? I don't owe her any rent.

"If you don't mind, Mr Kelemen. . . ." She seemed embarrassed. "It is very painful for me . . . but I . . ."

"Is anything the matter?"

"Not exactly . . . but I must speak to you . . . you've always been an agreeable tenant, but the porter told me that you brought a strange woman last night . . ."

He raised his head in anger. Madam—he would show her that he would not put up with it. But the next moment he laughed, and said lightly: "Look here, Mrs Hunka, if you don't like what I do, you may give me notice to move on the first. Until then I'll bring in anyone I like." He walked to the door and opened it. She stumbled out.

Insolent old woman! But there was no anger left in him, and he laughed again. It's a shame to bring a decent girl to this rotten hole. He stood by the window watching the rain. Wretched autumn weather. To-night I'll put on my dinner jacket and take Maca somewhere.

He went to the wardrobe and tried to find a clean dress shirt. All three were in the bottom drawer with the dirty linen. He rang the bell for the maid.

"Kati, take these shirts to the laundry, and tell them to get them back as quickly as possible. The front and cuffs must be very stiff and shiny."

He took off his coat and put on his shabby alpaca office jacket, stirred the fire and lay down on the sofa. An hour's sleep will do me good. I didn't have much last night. And then he remembered the fantastic story about the red-haired woman. Good God! I must have been crazy. What on earth made me tell all that? I've got to cut it out and get down to business. No use worrying about the past. What would have happened if I hadn't lost my job? Or if Joli hadn't been sensible. . . .

He jumped up and paced the room in savage anger, but his head began to whirl and he lay down on the bed. I'm acting like a child. The bell rang, a man's voice in the hall, then someone knocked at his door.

"Come in," he shouted, and raised himself on his elbow.

Little Weiss. "Hello, Kelemen. What's the matter? Sick?" What is he doing here? What does he want? "I had to see a doctor across the street. I've got too much uric acid, would you believe it? And since I was in the neighbourhood I just thought I'd drop in and see how you are. Are you sick?"

"Good lord, no! Why?"

"Why didn't you come to the café last night then?"

"Oh, I see," he said, slowly. Shall I tell him I forgot all about it? He won't believe me. "I was sorry, but

I had an important engagement—about a new job. What happened last night? ”

Little Weiss made himself comfortable in the chair, crossed his legs, and rested his elbow on the edge of the table. “ Too bad you weren’t there. We had a celebration—everyone came. Farewell party.”

“ Farewell party? ”

“ Yes. Farewell to Kadar.”

“ Kadar? ”

“ Yes. He wasn’t there, of course. He left a day or two ago, but he furnished all the conversation. We summed up the Kadar situation, so to speak.”

“ Well? ”

“ And we came to the conclusion that our illustrious Toni Kadar is exactly the same nincompoop to-day that he was at school. Only he’s got meaner and more selfish, which is not surprising. They all get that way—*nouveaux riches*.”

Little Weiss talked, his right elbow resting on the table, his left arm waving in the air. He stood up and went on talking while he strode back and forth, then sat down again. He spoke without pausing for breath—in colorful phrases and emphatic contrasts, imitating other people’s voices.

Everyone had been there last night. Even Salgo and Vavrinetz, who had not come for years. Apparently everybody suspected Kadar from the minute he appeared. Simon said: “ If a man we haven’t heard a word from for ten years suddenly turns up with sixteen trunks, there is a skeleton somewhere. Simon found out from the aliens department that his wife was ten years older than he. We were a little surprised at first, but when we thought it over, those ten years explained everything. The

penguin is no more and no less than a gigolo. Of course, you can't accuse him of being a gigolo in a small way. It's a shame Simon couldn't trace her family, and find out how she happened to get hold of all that money. But that's not as interesting as the reason why Kadar had to go abroad. Vavrinetz knew about that—in 1919 the penguin was kicked out of the university on account of his bolshevistic activities. After that he disappeared from Budapest—probably served a term in jail, but we don't know for certain. But we do know that Vidor told Katona—that two or three years later the penguin was going round begging with a cock-and-bull story in London. He managed to get a lot of money out of Vidor, and now, when they met again, he tried to pretend he didn't remember it.

“Well,” continued little Weiss, while Kelemen listened without moving a muscle of his face, “they all said they disliked Kadar from the day he arrived, although I reminded them that they seemed very much impressed by him. I was myself. But Simon and Kalotay shouted me down. Wait till you hear what he did to Kalotay. They got to talking one day about real estate—Kalotay is in it, you know. Then Kadar kept asking questions and making suggestions until Kalotay agreed to work for him. He neglected his regular business, and brought him one proposal after another. The penguin shrugged his shoulders and wouldn't say yes or no. Kalotay was fool enough to work for him, prepare estimates, and so on, and after he had gone to all the trouble and considerable expense, the penguin left without even saying good-bye. More like a crook than a business man.

“The same thing happened to Marton. He pretended to be interested in a bank that is connected with Marton's

political party. For three months Marton negotiated with the directors of the bank, and even gave up his vacation. And then one fine day Kadar laid down on him. But that's not all. You wouldn't believe how many things he poked his nose into. Amman gave him a chance at a first-rate export proposition, in which the State would have had a share. Amman said that he could have bought a house with the little interest he would have got out of it. Almost cried when he told us.

"I tell you, nobody escaped him. He hinted to Simon that he might go down to his home town, somewhere in Transylvania, to visit his parents' graves, and suggested that he would take Simon with him for company on the way. Simon put off an important business trip waiting for him, and of course nothing came of it. Have you ever heard of such a thing? He played the same kind of trick on Rona, and Weiss, and Salgo, and I don't know who else.

"But let me tell you the high point of the whole evening. Nemes sat there the whole time without opening his mouth, and then, when we had all had our say, he started in. 'Now I'm going to tell you something,' he said. 'I don't know who Kadar is, or why he came to Budapest, or what kept him here for months. I only spoke to him once, in this café, and I thought he was a cool and clear-thinking person. I don't care how much money he has or where it comes from. All I'm interested in is that he is a capitalist who squeezes his fortune out of proletarian hands and brains. But, as far as you are concerned, I know that all of you smelled money on him and wanted to rob him. Only you didn't have the guts. You were just petty crooks, cowardly pickpockets, miser-

able little fools who hoped to swindle him. And he wouldn't fall into your clumsy trap.' You can imagine the uproar that started.

"Amman is thinking of challenging him to a duel, but he's not sure he could obtain satisfaction from a socialist that way. It was a grand night . . . But listen, Andor, this is what I think. I didn't see Kadar more than three times, and nobody can say I had any plans to rob him—not even to the extent of selling him a suit of woollen underwear. I agree, if you like, that he is a crook and a gigolo. A fat lot I care. But, between ourselves, I must say I think Nemes was right. We are business men, and we try to make money where and how we can. But to make a concentrated attack against a fellow's pocket was unfair, and stupid too. I think Nemes was perfectly right."

Kelemen listened without taking his eyes off little Weiss. Go on, talk, Weiss! I deserve what you say, even if you don't include me in it. Go on, Weiss, let's have it out. Torture me. I deserve it, and it will help me to get over the whole business. And little Weiss continued. "But there is something else I ought to mention. You know, Andor . . . it's rather awkward . . . it concerns you."

"Well?" he said, in a hollow voice.

"Listen . . . promise me that this will be strictly between ourselves, and that you won't be annoyed. I think it is my duty as an old friend to tell you . . ."

"Well?"

"Don't hurry me . . . I heard it from Simon. He told us when we were going home—only Rona and Marton and Kalotay were with us." He doesn't need to say anything more. I know what's coming. "You know Simon

is a terrible gossip . . . he said that the reason why Kadar stayed on, even when his wife was in Italy . . .”

“Why?” Kelemen groaned.

“It was a woman . . . or rather . . . look here, I’ll be honest with you . . .”

Kelemen sat up on the sofa. His sudden movement made Weiss break off. Silence.

“Well, are you going to speak up or aren’t you?”

“All right—Simon said there was something between Kadar and your sister . . .”

Kelemen jumped to his feet. “What do you mean?”

“Well, Kadar was running after her . . . that is to say . . .”

“To say what?”

“That they understood each other . . . Good God, you know what I mean. They were seen all over the place together, and . . .”

Kelemen’s face turned pale. Weiss stood up, his mouth half open, as if he were struggling to keep back his words. Kelemen took a step forward trembling, steadied himself, then picked up a cigarette from the table and lit it. He stood in front of little Weiss, and his voice was perfectly calm, even supercilious.

“Rubbish,” he said. “Silly gossip, Weiss.”

“That’s what I said—gossip. But I wanted you to know.”

“Thank you. I don’t really give a damn. I’m not angry, and I’m sure my sister won’t be either. The dirty swine! I wasn’t there last night, so they took their rage out on me. Swine!”

“You’re right,” said Weiss eagerly. “Don’t pay any attention to them.” Kelemen walked to the window and back again.

"I'm going to tell you something, Weiss, and I don't mind if you repeat it to them. . . . Tell them that Kadar was seriously considering their propositions, and it was I who warned him to go easy. I told him that in one way or another they were trying to rob him, and I advised him not to take up any of their schemes. I tipped him off!"

"Is that so?" said Weiss skeptically.

"And if he was running after a woman," a bitter line appeared around his mouth, "that is a private matter. Do you understand? It's nobody's business. We're not children. And I don't give a damn for any of them."

His voice was cold, hollow. Little Weiss had nothing to say. Kelemen stood quietly for a moment, then took off the frayed alpaca jacket.

"Are you going out?"

"Yes." He put on his blue serge coat, and felt in the pockets.

"Now?"

"Soon. I have an appointment with a girl at six. It is a private matter, but I don't mind telling you. We're old friends."

"I say, Andi, I do hope there are no hard feelings . . ."

"Of course not," he answered, in a condescending voice. "Why should there be?" He took the bottle of cognac. "Will you have a drink with me?"

He watched little Weiss as he boarded a streetcar. It was still raining. Kelemen lingered a moment, then started to walk. At the Octagon he noticed that it was raining hard, and opened his umbrella. It was a good thing that little Weiss had told him what he himself would never have had the courage to say. I'll get over it better if I suffer. As he walked, he kept close to the buildings. In a few minutes he reached the drug store where Maca

worked. In the window stood a miniature Eiffel Tower, built of shiny blue cardboard, and behind it a painted view of Paris, like a stage setting. Paris is a wonderful place. I ought to go there. More chances for a job in Paris than here. No, Paris is better for a holiday trip. I'll take Maca to Paris on a spree. I can manage somehow to keep alive. He glanced through the glass door. No customers. Between the two counters sat a fat little man in a white coat, a newspaper in his hand. The boss probably. The man put down the paper, and looked over his spectacles at the door. Kelemen stepped in.

"Good-evening. What can I do for you?"

He saw Maca behind the cash desk, doing figures on a sheet of paper. "Good-evening."

Maca raised her head as she heard his voice. "Hello!" She came towards him. She, too, wore a long white coat. "It's nice of you to come. Do you want to buy something? Mr Bokor, this gentleman is an old friend. Will you give him a special discount?"

"Of course; what can I show you?"

Kelemen stood uneasily, looking from the counter to the glass case: conical bottles, colored flagons, cream jars, big sponges in a basket, razor blade show-cards—hundreds of pretty little things waiting to be bought. The store was filled with Maca's fragrance. Good. Bokor tactfully went into the back room, but left the mirror-panelled door ajar.

"Razor blades? These are the best ones. It's really nice of you to come."

"Didn't you think I would?"

"Oh, yes, but . . . no, I knew you would."

"Shall we go somewhere to-night? Theatre, maybe?"

"Marvellous! Which one? . . . No, don't tell me."

I want to be surprised . . . Look, this is a new kind of soap. I bought some myself and it's really good."

"And then we'll have dinner and go to my place."

"Sssh!" she nodded in the direction of the door. "I can't leave before seven to-night, because I have to balance the books. Come back for me here just after seven. But look—can I go to the theatre like this?" She opened the white coat and showed underneath it a white pullover and a blue skirt. He looked at her little pointed breasts.

"Like this?"

"Yes—it's the new pullover. I bought it to-day at lunch time. And . . . maybe you'll think I'm very extravagant, but on the way back I looked in a shoe-maker's window . . . I know you'll be angry with me . . . but I just had to go in and buy a pair of grey snakeskin shoes. Will you forgive me? . . . I spent all the money."

"No," he answered, "that's what I gave it to you for. Forget about it."

"All right. Let's sit in the back or in the circle."

"Don't worry," he said quickly. "I haven't enough money for expensive seats."

"Haven't you though," she laughed. "I don't believe you. But I rather like you to be economical. I have to get back to work now if I want to be ready at seven."

Bokor re-appeared, glanced at the small pile of things, looked approval at the girl, and ceremoniously began to make out the bill. "Razor blades, shaving cream, soap, Eau de Cologne, talc powder, cuticle-scissors, alum stick, rubber sponge, wire hairbrush, altogether . . . less five per cent . . . seventeen forty, net," he announced cheer-

fully. Kelemen handed over the money, said good-bye, and left.

He walked slowly along the Andrassy Avenue in the rain, the small parcel fastened to one of his overcoat buttons. We'll go to the Comedy Theatre—Molnar's new play. And I'll marry her. She'll be willing. Nonsense! Day-dreams again. We'll play around together for a while until we are tired of each other, and then go our own ways in a decent, civilized fashion: "Good-bye, sweetheart." No bother, no complications. I'll take her to the Comedy. Marvellous. She always says marvellous to everything. She's a stupid little thing, but that's neither here nor there. The stupider the better. You have no money?—Of course not, my dear. Let there be no misunderstanding about that. None whatever. Let's look the facts in the face. It is not so easy to sell standard furniture or textiles. You have to work very hard to earn money. Now let's figure things out; first a place to live—say a room and breakfast. No, full board and lodging. You can get that for a hundred and twenty. Nothing very aristocratic, of course, but good enough. Then we shall have to give Mama forty. That makes a hundred and sixty. Twenty to pay off old bills, sundries another twenty, and there we must have two hundred. The first hundred is assured. The second will come out of commissions. It will come somehow or other. The main thing is that the day-dreams I used to spin are over. I've come down to facts.

We'll have to start in a small way, just as my father did when he first came to Budapest. He had to fight to make a living for his children. . . . We'll have children too. We're strong and healthy. We're not sick . . .

you know what I mean. I only made a mistake. It wasn't anybody's fault, certainly not Joli's. If anyone is to blame, it is I. I let a crazy idea run away with me. The moral is: if you don't want to fall, don't try to fly.

He stopped in front of the station for a moment. This is where they came in. If you don't want to fall . . . He looked at the clock. Half-past six. I'll have to meet Maca at seven. I'll get balcony seats in the centre. If I can't get them in the centre, the side will have to do. He went into a theatre ticket agency and bought two inexpensive seats. That is all we can afford, my dear. But if we go carefully we may build up a little fortune. No reason why we shouldn't.

Suddenly he realized that he was going in the wrong direction. Enough time for a little walk, and I can get back by streetcar in ten minutes. The rain was still falling, though not with the same dreary monotony. Gusts of wind shook the rain-soaked, leafless trees, and street lamps swung to and fro.

Rotten weather. South Africa is the land of sunshine. . . . Suddenly a leaden weariness overwhelmed him. The other night when he came back from the station he had felt this same sort of terrible exhaustion. He reached the bridge, and stood at the streetcar stop. A trolley appeared in the distance, came slowly nearer, then halted. Half empty. It goes straight to the drug store. Two working men got out, and an old woman with a feathered hat and a bulging suitcase climbed in. What is she? Travelling salesman? The conductor looked at him, then pulled the bell cord, and the trolley moved on. There was a milk shop at the corner. Someone opened the door, and a sour, rank smell flooded out.

The climate of South Africa is similar to that of the northern shores of the Mediterranean. . . . He began to hear a faint buzzing in his head. We shall have to start in a small way. The big scheme is spoiled, but the small scheme may come off. . . . I should have taken the trolley. Seven o'clock, I mustn't keep her waiting. I'll ride along the Boulevard to the Andrassy Avenue and walk from there . . . and he entered the desolate little park beside the bridge.

Good God! what's the matter with me. I should have turned left for the streetcar stop. As if he were wading through mud he plodded on with heavy steps. We are going to the Comedy. I must take Mama to the theatre some night too. She only likes operettas—two loving couples and a happy ending, whether you want it or not.

He felt another wave of weariness. If he did not sit down he would collapse. He gripped the back of a bench. It was damp, and a puddle of rain had collected on the seat. The rain drizzled incessantly. I must sit down. I can't walk another step. The dampness and the cold sent an icy shiver down his spine. I'll go into a café and have a glass of cognac . . . or I'll rest a few minutes here on the embankment . . . there must be some sort of waitingroom . . . it's nearer.

He walked on down the embankment. I've lived in Budapest for thirty-two years, but I've never been here before. He dragged himself on and on, his head filled with throbbing noises, his body tormented by unbearable fatigue, and flickerings of impatience. He reached the lower embankment and crawled along past a row of sheds. How dark it is—as if it were late at night. Good, quiet night . . . after all those noisy, blinding days . . . I must

have a long sleep before work begins on the first . . . twelve hours a night . . .

His open umbrella knocked against the wooden wall of a shed. He started and drew away. The lights on the bridge blinked feebly through the mist. The walls of the sheds came to an end, and he stood by the steps of a deserted landing stage. It will freeze soon, and they will pull ashore the floating gangways. He sank down on a bench near the waitingroom, holding the open umbrella stiffly over his head.

Well, let's go now. What am I doing here anyway? Why don't I get up? I should have been on the Andrassy Avenue long ago to meet her. Now I'll have to take a taxi, and I shouldn't waste money on taxis. I can't afford them. I'll have to begin in a small way. Maybe I'll succeed. Why don't I go? But what if I don't succeed?

A curious weakness attacked his arm. He dropped the umbrella; it struck the ground with a soft thud, rolled a short distance on its stretched silk, then stopped with the handle pointing upwards, like the carcass of a weird black animal. God! God! Something is wrong with me. I must go home—I'm sick. I must pick up the umbrella. What am I doing here? Good God, good God, I must take her to the theatre; good God, I mustn't be late; what am I doing here? Why didn't I take the trolley, it's cold and raining. I want sunshine—now, dear God. I'll be in the newspapers again, dear God—The river washed up the body of an unknown man at Paks. No, not unknown. Andor Kelemen (34), a book-keeping clerk out of work. Good God, I must get away from here. I won't let myself go, I won't let myself go.

And then everything was cool and clear within him;

the cool, tranquil light of the complete comprehension of things. He stood up, walked to the edge of the water, and descended two stone steps cut into the embankment. No, I can't face it. . . . I can't begin all over again this whole futile madness. . . . It will have to end now, neatly, quickly, peacefully, cleanly. Two more steps down. Everything went wrong. I lost . . . I might have been killed in the War. I wish I had . . . not like this . . . but it's too late now. God, forgive me, don't be angry with me. . . . I didn't mean to do this. . . . I didn't think it would end this way. God, have mercy on me; let me go home to you decently. His left foot trembled as the water swept over his ankle, and he sat down on the steps abruptly. Cold . . . co-cold water cure is good for every kind of trouble. . . .

The river was dark, restless, swift. He stood up to his knees in the water, and the icy grip of it numbed his legs, froze his thoughts. Funny—it's not co-cold—and I can swim. It was dark, but there was within him a strong light, a clear, soothing, peaceful radiance. And, somehow, he had exactly the same sensation as once long ago, in his childhood at Christmas time, when the decorated tree was standing in the drawingroom, the presents laid out beneath it, the door locked. He knew he would get a toy train, a fortress, and a magic lantern—just what he wished for—only he did not know yet precisely what the train looked like, nor the fortress, nor the magic lantern. A curious, sweet, expectant feeling. He let himself slide quietly into the water.

It was over in a few seconds. He sank instantly. The current seized him and swept him away for a few yards, then slackened its grip on him; his head re-appeared, and, with the intoxication of death, or with the frenzied

instinct to live, a desperate cry burst from his lips: "He-e-e-elp!" His lungs forced the water through his nose and mouth. His wet clothing dragged him down, and he disappeared again for a moment. Struggling frantically he came up once more, this time almost waist-high, the small white parcel from the drug store still on his overcoat button. He dropped back—and the ancient mortal terror of the passing world swept across the river in his cry of vanishing consciousness—"He-e-e-elp!" . . . The water gurgled greedily, spitefully. He went under.

The sound echoed across the river, along the banks, against the sheds, and made its way into a small room where two customs officers were sitting over their pipes in the faint, reddish gleam of a dull electric lamp.

"Somebody yelled!" Instantly they were on the bank. When the second cry struck their ears, they ran in the direction of the sound. It was dark. A few quick steps, then they stopped, helpless.

"Can you see anything?"

"Not a thing—can you?"

They looked at the black stream.

"I know somebody yelled—twice."

"Yes."

A sharp, malicious wind cut their faces.

"But I haven't seen anyone coming this way."

"Neither have I."

Silence. The water lapped gently, harmlessly, under the stone coping.

"I'm sure he yelled twice. I heard it."

"Yes, so did I."

The taller of the two shrugged his shoulders, and turned away from the river.

"Damn! Another one. Anyway, it's all over with him now."

"Yes, it's all over."

They walked in silence back to their office in the sleepily dripping rain.

BUDAPEST, *Spring and Summer*, 1931.

THE END

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